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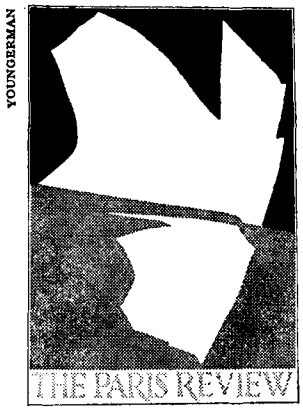

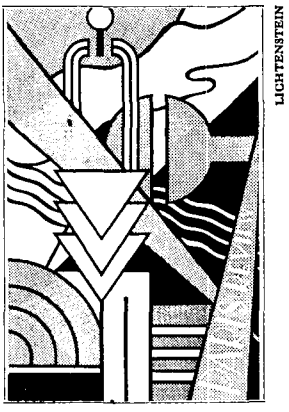

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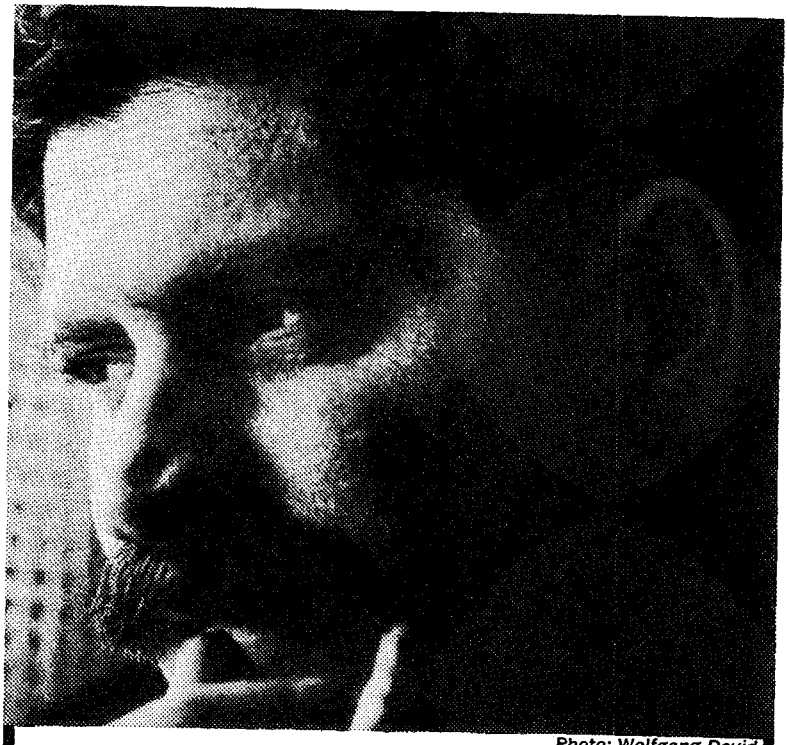

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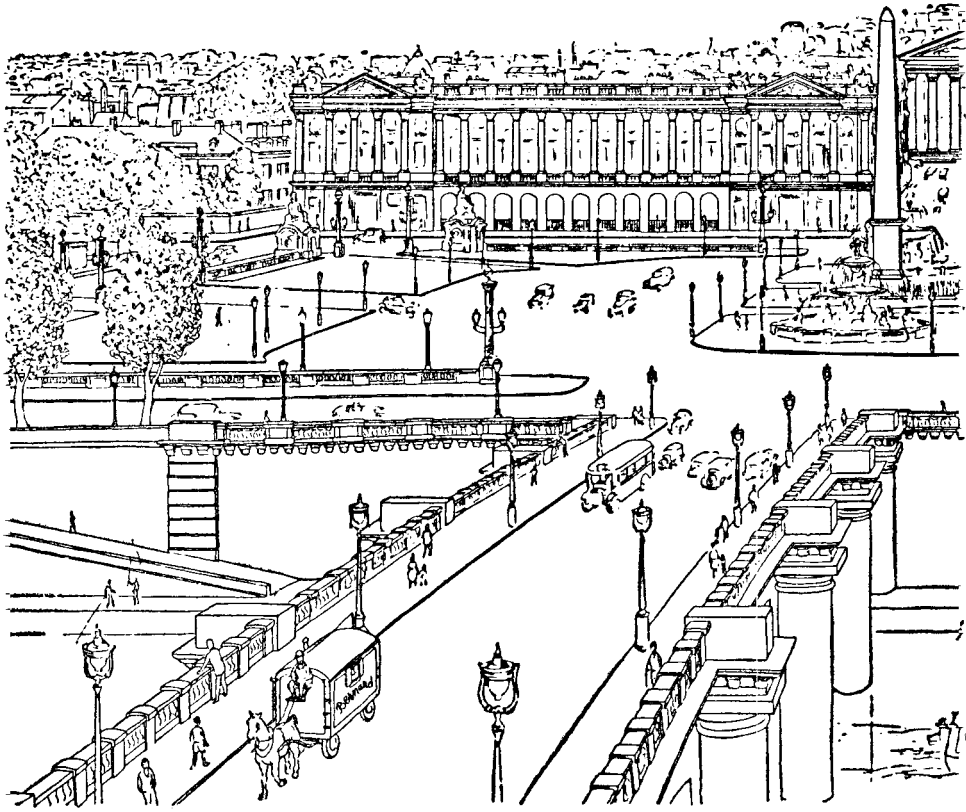

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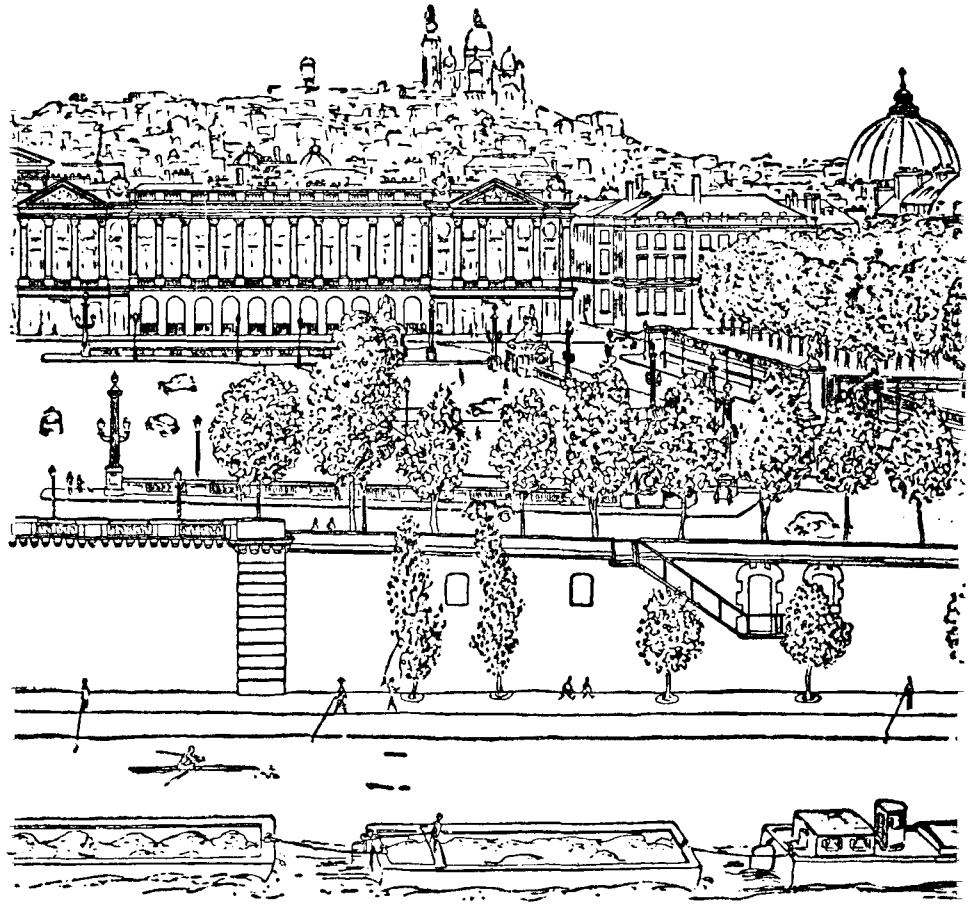

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Fingers and Toes

Leonard Michaels

I scribbled a hasty note, regretful, to the point. Fourteen pages, sharp as knives. I refuse. I don't feel good. The date is inconvenient. Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. Then I stopped and sat rigid as a sphinx. Henry was my dearest friend. It was brutal not to mitigate such severity. Not many people count in one's life. A fool slams doors. Who knows, given the vicissitudes, where a man has to grovel tomorrow? I sprang forward and said as much. I told him his company was more precious to me than my own. I'd love to come to your dinner party, I said. Nothing short of atomic holocaust can prevent it. You're a man of genius and personality. You give life to my life. But refuse, I must. To be frank, Henry, it's impossible for me to come. You are a person who doesn't like me. Why? I could say this or that, but who knows his own deficiencies? Who? We know each other too well these days, but who, who among us knows what the others know? The mystery of self lies here, Henry. There in the hearts of others. Consider how often we've laughed at a mutual friend and said, That's just like him, or, You know Ahab would do that sort of thing. Yet the man himself, Henry, does he say these things? No. He goes his way, grinning, tipping his hat, waving to friends on every side. He goes ass out in the eyes of the world. I flew to the mirror,

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ripped down my pants. I flew back and said, Henry, I read books, I go to the movies, I look constantly in mirrors both literal and figurative. But do I see anything? How could I? I'm not my friend. I'm not Henry. I'm Phillip, Henry. Your friend. I could say things about you that would make your nipples pucker. As for your invitation let me say I am delighted to accept it. I reread the note, chucked up laughs like the clap of big buttocks, and flushed it down the bowl. The one I sent was a stream of polite, innocuous drivel. Twenty-five pages. Pleasing to hear from him, I said. I confessed that I loved to get letters, especially invitations. For just that alone I was grateful to him. I wished so much I could come to his dinner party. Nothing I'd rather, but I had stomach cancer and had to pass it up. Some future date perhaps when they cut out my stomach, etc., etc. I was sitting beside the phone nibbling dexedrine when he called.

"I just read your letter, Phillip. Woo, what a letter. I'm sorry you're sick."

"My feet are like sea shells, Henry."

"No."

"Sea shells. Curled, hard, I walk bonky, bonky."

"Phillip, you're not the only one. Every time I lose touch with a friend something terrible happens to him. I could go on and on. I hate letters."

"Mine was impulsive. I'll never write you again."

"I hate to walk in the street, Phillip. I might meet some friend about to kill himself. I sneak everywhere. I wanted to talk to you, by the way, about our dinner party. And now look. I intended to say a few words to make you change your mind. This is what I get."

"Months of silence, Henry. Things happen."

"I couldn't leave well enough alone. Besides, Marjorie insisted. 'Call Phillip. Call Phillip,' she said. Such a trivial matter, one night, a dinner party. The truth is, Phillip, there aren't many people in one's life who count. I could ask seventy or eighty people for that night, but how many of them would be you?"

"I was going to kill myself that night."

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"Are you saying you won't come?"

"But I'll come."

"I knew you would. I know you so well, Phillip. You have no convictions."

I laughed. He did, too. Nee, nee, nee. Behind him somewhere Marjorie clapped her mouth. Nee, nee filtered through, female, insidious. Henry snarled. I did, too. Footsteps hurried away and I knew there was going to be trouble. From a distance Marjorie screamed, "I laugh, I pee and I don't care who knows it." Henry said, "I'll call you back, Phillip." "Just tell him to come," she screamed.

I quivered all over. It was excruciating to bear such knowledge. The private life of a friend is to be dreamed about, never known. I went to the bathroom and stepped under a hot shower. Wax coiled out of my ears like snakes. The phone rang again. "Henry," I said, "didn't you call earlier?" I picked up the phone. "Henry," I said, and he said, "Then we'll expect you, Phillip."

"Of course."

"It wasn't of course a little while ago."

His voice was hard and mean. I remembered he could be that way and shook my head.

"You know me, Henry."

"Of course, of course, but I'd as soon you stayed in your rathole downtown if you don't feel like coming."

"Just tell me when."

"Next Wednesday. Six-thirty. Perhaps you can't make it at such a wild hour?"

"It's perfect. One of the best times. It gives me pleasure just to think about it."

"You ought to hang up the phone and masturbate."

"Don't be silly. I'll just open the window."

Nee, nee we laughed. I grinned and shook my head. I remembered how witty he could be.

"And another thing, Phillip. It's not crucial, but I want to say it."

"Please."

"I know about you and Marjorie, Phillip."

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"Don't say it."

"Makes no difference. We're civilized people, not Victorians. What's finished is finished, no more, void. What remains is friendship. Our friendship. Even stronger than before. I hope you feel the same way. That's how Marjorie feels."

"That's how I feel, too, Henry."

"Then there isn't anything more to be said about that. Am I right?"

"You're right."

"Are you absolutely sure? I don't like to leave things unsaid, Phillip. They always come out one way or another."

"I know, I know. Henry, I get boils on my neck when I leave things unsaid."

"Good, then you understand me. Next Wednesday, Phillip. Six-thirty."

"Right."

Nee, nee we laughed and said goodbye.

Dinner with them was out. Furthermore I wouldn't eat a thing. Not that night and not until that night. The idea just came to me. I didn't struggle to establish thesis and antithesis. It came BOOMBA. Real ideas strike like eagles. A man who loves premises and conclusions loves a whore. I wouldn't eat that night and not until that night. That's how well he knew me. Not at all.

I ran about my room until I got sleepy and then spent the night whirling in bed shrieking curses. At dawn I was sitting up with two fists of hair, cool as a buddha. Dinner with them was out. The idea gave me shivers. Fat ran off. Bones lifted under the skin. I went and leaned against the refrigerator door. Hours passed, the day, the night. I leaned with the insouciance of a hoodlum or a whore. I gazed down at my feet. Gaunt, sharp as chicken feet. The objective principles on which I stood. The first line of a poem came to me: "Bitter, proud metatarsals." I smelled chicken salad and cream cheese, but didn't move until I ripped open the refrigerator door, grabbed handfuls of salad and cheese and flung them out the window.

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"Ya, ya," I shouted, "food is out." My hand seized a frozen steak and flung it into my mouth. I swallowed. Instantly, I became depressed. The steak was in. Like a virgin deflowering I sank to the floor. The steak worked grimly inside. I wanted to make it stop. My stomach churned like the back of a garbage truck. Arteries sucked. I had the steak in my neck, thighs, fingers, toes. But all right, I thought. I'll journey to the end of the night like St. Augustine and the Marquis de Sade. The more things are different the more they are the same. Immoral is moral.

I went to the nearest restaurant, a fish house. It made no difference. I ate a cow, I'd eat a fish. I ordered lobster Leningrad and a plate of mixed crawlers, flung everything inside and chewed in a deliberate way. In my mind I said, "Yum." The waiter refilled my bread basket. I grunted, "Thanks." People like me, he said, made his job meaningful. I told him I understood food. He nodded.

"May I watch?"

"Please," I said.

He stood beside my chair and put his hand discreetly on my shoulder. His mouth moved with mine. When I finished he smiled and asked if I enjoyed the meal. I rubbed my stomach and winked. He nodded in an appreciative way. I leaped from my chair. We embraced. "My name is Phillip," I said. He said he could tell. I squeezed money into his hand. He protested. I refused to listen, squeezed more, snapped up the menu and shoved it down into my crotch.

Days passed. The dinner party was only hours away. As it drew closer I couldn't repress what Henry had said. He knew I was going to come. He knew me so well. "But you were very wrong," I said. However wrong I could indulge the idea that he was right. I indulged it: "You were right." The idea gave me pleasure. The pleasure of an infant. Something turned, poked, smelled, very known. I bobbled out into the street and walked among strangers to intensify the pleasure. None of them knew me. I went to a liquor store and bought wine, red and white, to express my contempt for Henry's dinner. A bottle of Armenian khaki was on sale. I bought it, too, then

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left and bought flowers. Around midnight I stood outside Henry's door. It was open, welcoming the night. There were seventy or eighty people in the house. I knocked. Henry came running. "Someone's at the door," he yelled. "Phillip. What a surprise."

I leaped backward into the darkness. He leaped after me and caught my arm. "Come in, come in." He took my wine and flowers and flung them into a closet. "We had a little dinner party."

"I already had dinner. Thanks for inviting me in, Henry. I can't stay."

"Why not?"

"I'd rather not talk about it. It's nothing personal."

"But Phillip, I want to talk to you."

"Let me continue for a moment. Then I'm going back to my rathole. I appreciate your invitation more than I can tell you. You believe me?"

"Of course."

"Don't say of course. I really mean it."

"I do, too, of course."

"Don't say of course, Henry. You mean a great deal to me. You're my dearest friend, the only one I have. It kills me not to come to your dinner party. But I can't. Let's not talk about it, all right? I don't ask a lot of favors of you."

"Will you have a drink?"

"Bourbon."

"Ice? Water?"

"No. In fact, look, don't even pour it into the glass."

I snapped up the bottle and swallowed. People were everywhere, standing, sitting, talking, smoking, drinking. It was a brilliant crowd. The women had nice legs. The men looked as if it didn't matter. I felt a bit out of place because I didn't know any of them. Henry touched my elbow. He spoke very quietly, very slowly, and as if we were the only ones there.

"Phillip, I do want to talk to you."

I was thrilled by the intensity of his voice.

"There's nothing to talk about at a party," I said.

He shrugged. "You're right, Phillip."

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"What do you want to talk about?"

He shrugged again. It was very like him to do that when he had a lot on his mind. "About? You're hungry for topics? I want more than to talk about. I want dialogue, Phillip, not topics. I don't want to talk about a thing. Things crap up talk."

"I agree. Now I'm going, Henry."

"Go."

"But I'll listen for a minute if you like."

"Can you listen for a minute? Don't say yes if you can't."

"I'll listen for a minute."

"Phillip, I'm going out of my mind."

"Why?"

"I couldn't tell you in a million years."

"It's been good talking to you, Henry."

"*Wait, Phillip. I want to tell you a story. Not a story, a* parable."

"Oh."

"It represents my connection with the elemental life. Nothing else. Not art, not politics, not history, not anything but the elemental life. The truth is, Phillip, I don't give a damn about anything else. I'm talking about love."

"I know. I can tell."

"Of course. Phillip, listen. The first time Marjorie and I went out we went to a movie. I don't remember what was playing. At any rate I put my arm around her and my hand fell on her breast. She didn't say anything. She trembled. At first, Phillip, I didn't notice where my hand had fallen. Then I felt her trembling and I noticed. I trembled. I was a hand. She was a breast. I don't have to tell you what a trembling breast feels like."

"Don't tell me."

"I've gone too far now to stop."

"No more about the breast."

"If I stop I'll be like Satan floating in space or Macbeth on his way to stab Duncan. Imagine if they had stopped. They would have felt like creeps. It's the kind of thing, Phillip, you have to get over with."

"Get it over with. You trembled, she trembled."

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"I was a hand. She was a breast. One day, not much later, I touched her you know where and said, 'You tremble.' I told her I noticed and wondered if she noticed. More than that I wondered if she noticed that I noticed. Never in my life was I so sincerely concerned about anything. It was a feeling. Do you follow me, Phillip? I knew immediately it was a feeling. Clear, authentic, like you standing here this minute. You're standing here, right? Nothing less. That's how this was. Nothing less."

"I see. What happened?"

"Phillip, I could spring up on her like an Irish setter and she wouldn't notice unless I called it to her attention."

"I don't know what to say."

"Say what you think. Say whatever you think."

"You lost your connection with the elementa life, is that it?"

"You could say that."

"At least you have dialogue, Henry. Where's Marjorie, by the way? I don't see her anywhere."

"Do you see that door? Go through it, you'll find her."

I looked at the door. It had a quality of shutness. I looked at Henry's face. It had the same quality, something vertical and shut, like the face of a mountain. Impassive, forbidding, beckoning, irresistible. Susceptibilities in my hands and feet became agitated.

"I won't go through any doors, Henry."

"I wouldn't have talked about this with anyone but you, Phillip."

"I'm flattered, but not another word, please."

"In that room, Phillip, in the dark, in a corner..."

"I'm leaving now."

I glanced away. He glanced after me. He arrived, I was gone. I turned back and looked him directly around the eyes, a swimming look. He tried to pierce it but wallowed. His eyes flailed for a grip but I widened my focus. "Phillip," he cried, "go speak to her. Tell her my love."

"Ech," I said. "I knew it would come to this. Tell her yourself. I'm going."

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"Go. You have no right to go, but go. I've told you everything. Take it. Throw it in a sewer someplace."

"Be reasonable. What can I say to her?"

"Don't play stupid. You and she had plenty to say to each other before I came along. Say anything, just make her come out or let me come in."

"Henry."

"You owe me this. I'll never feel it's over between you unless you do it. Make her call me in there."

"What if I can't?"

"Then I'll know what it means and I'll kill you. To me the connection between love and death is very close."

"Henry."

His hand clutched my elbow like the claw of an angry bird. He walked me to the door.

"Henry, what can I do?"

"You know what."

He opened the door and shoved me through it. The door shut and I was in such darkness that I staggered and swayed. The sound of clinking glasses and talking trickled in after me, but I felt no relation to it. I was steeped, immobilized, wrapped up tight as a mummy. I was without head or arms or feet and my brain was suspended like a cloud. "Marjorie," I said. My voice whooshed away. No answer came. I crooned, "Marjorie, it's Phillip." A hiss cut the dark and there was a rough scratching like scales on rocks. "Marjorie," I crooned again, bending slowly until my hands touched the floor. "It's Phillip. I know you're there." I was on my hands and knees, whispering, urgent and conspiratorial. I leaned forward and put out my hand, letting it drift into the blackness like a little boat. I heard breathing. My hand drifted into it. My eyes bulged. I leaned after my hand, saw nothing, but smelled her very close and felt her heat on my face. The hiss came again. My hand drifted further into the darkness, my fingertips quivering, quickening to the shape, the texture, the person of Marjorie. There was a slash. My hand snapped back.

"Don't try that again, jackass," she said.

"My hand is bleeding."

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"Good."

"Henry has a lot of friends out there, Marjorie. Why don't you step outside for a moment and slash them up?"

"Give me your hand."

"Fat chance."

"Give it to me. I didn't mean to hurt you."

My hand drifted forward. She took it in both of hers and licked it.

"Better?"

"Feels all right."

I started to draw my hand back again. She hissed, clutched it tightly. I dragged. She wrapped herself around it, shimmied up my arm and hung from my shoulder like a bunch of bananas. She whimpered in my ear, "Phillip, I'm miserable."

I patted her knee with my free hand. She tightened her grip with her legs and pressed her face into my neck.

"It's not me they'll meet if I go out there. Not the me I am."

I felt sexual irritation and started patting her harder.

"I know what you mean."

"Phillip, when I woke up this morning there was something lying right beside me. You know what?"

"What?" I said, patting, patting. "Henry?"

"Me. Stretched out right beside me and staring at me in such a sad way."

"It's the *Zeitgeist*, Marjorie."

Blood stopped flowing in my arm. I tried to move it. She squeezed.

"Me," she said. "I want me, me, me."

I tried to shrug her off but it was like trying to shrug off a big wart. I smeared her against the floor, got up and smeared her against a wall. She clung like my head on my neck, my foot on my leg. I rolled, rammed into tables and chairs. She clung. I leaped up and came down on her. She clung. She gnawed my neck, nibbled, licked, squeezed. I stopped and lay still. I tried to think, but darkness seeped into my ideas, clogged the parts and connections with heavy, impenetrable scum. Her fingers and toes worked into me like worms, coiling around tendons and bones. I could tell she was nervous

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and said, "Marjorie, as long as I'm here why don't you tell me what's wrong. I'll listen. Something wrong between you and Henry, for example?"

"There's nothing wrong."

"Is it this party? Don't you like this party?"

"I love it."

"But there is something wrong?"

"Nothing."

Instinctively, I wanted to punch her in the head. I said, "Marjorie, for all I care you can fester in here. Let me go."

She licked and squeezed.

"If you don't let go I'll punch you in the head."

She plunged her tongue into my ear. I breathed hard. Glaciers streamed down my face. Suddenly we heard footsteps approach the door and both of us lay still.

"You ask me what's modern," said a man. "No one feels anymore. That's modern."

Earrings tinkled as if a head were being shaken violently. A necklace rattled. "But I feel you can't say that," cried a girl. "I feel there are a lot of feelings today, feelings we feel deeply and that's why it feels as if we don't. I couldn't dance otherwise. How could I dance if I didn't? Answer that."

For a moment there was silence. Then the man spoke again, his voice dismal and pinched as if he had a finger in one nostril.

"Feel shmeel."

Marjorie whispered, "You feel, don't you?"

"I feel," I said, "but this is life. Who feels?" I thrashed. She clutched and bit. I collapsed and lay still. There was a bump against the door, hard rubbing, then a kick.

"Don't touch me," said a girl. "Look what you did to my dress. I think you suffer from jugular peacocks."

Others came by, stopped.

"Miss Genitalia, I'd like you to meet Miss Gapegunda."

"I'm sure she'll come back, Max. It's not like her to run out. She doesn't have carfare."

"If she comes back I'll spit in her face."

Marjorie was breathing as if she were asleep. I listened to her and to the people who came by and stopped outside the door.

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"What you said, Irma, makes a lot of sense," said a man.

"I was just talking."

"But very intelligently."

"You can't mean that. I was talking, that's all. If you don't talk at these parties they think you're a fool."

"I do mean it. I'd like you to write it all up and submit to my journal. Do you write German?"

Another man wheezed.

"Shut up, sweetheart. All right? Just once you shut up, all right? It's not so much to ask, is it? I say yes, you say no. I say no, you say yes. Why don't you write a book and shut up? Write one of mine in reverse. Where I say no you say yes."

"Fuck you, Ned."

Marjorie was asleep, wrapped around my arm like ten snakes. I moved a little. She constricted and said, "Nya, nya."

I lay still again and gaped into the darkness. It was important to think. I had a sense of the problematic towering above me in the darkness like a Gothic cathedral. Complex, violent, full of contradictions like the hairdo of a madwoman. I fell asleep. In my sleep I heard a knock at the door. It came drifting over waters like Noah's dove, little grey wings knocking through fog. It came closer, closer. I cried, "Here, little dovey." It went by, knocking dimly away into the fog.

"Phillip," said Henry.

I yelled in my dream, "Henureee."

Marjorie woke up, hissed, "Don't answer."

I tried to wake up.

"Phillip, you there? Who's there?"

Marjorie began moving all over me. She ripped open my shirt. She scraped off my shoes with her toes. I woke up as my zipper went down like a slashed throat. She wrenched under me. I said, "Love." She yelled and pummeled my back as if sending messages to friends across the veldt. "What's wrong?" I said.

"I like it, I like it," she yelled.

"Like what?" I said.

"Who's in there?" said Henry.

"Don't come in," I said.

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His footsteps went away.

Marjorie went limp, her arms outflopped, languid as lily stalks.

"Finish," she said.

Her legs fell apart as if cleaved by an axe.

"Hurry," she said.

I hurried. Footsteps came back to the door. There was a knock.

"Marjorie," said Henry. "Was that you in there?"

I hurried.

"Wait for me," she said. "Slow down."

"Of course," said Henry. "You know I will."

I slowed down.

"Do it," she said.

"I won't move an inchy winchy until you tell me to."

He made a kissing against the door.

"Up and down, up and down," she said.

"Ha, ha," said Henry. He jumped up and down, up and down. "Like this?"

"Yeah, yeah."

Nee, nee, nee he laughed. "Here I go up and down, up and down," he sang. "I'm skipping rope."

"Now," she yelled.

"Now?" said Henry. "Di oo say now now?"

"Wow, wow," she said.

"Marjorie," I said.

"Henry," she screamed.

He flung open the door. I was behind it. He laughed nee, nee, jumped up and down and came skipping into the room. I flew out. His knees struck the floor like cannon balls.

"Marjorie," he said.

"Love."

I got my flowers and wine and slipped out into the night. It was moonless and cold. I slipped into it nose first. It nosed into me. I twitched like a fish and went quivering through dingy dingles, from blackness to blackness to blackness to blackness.

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Four French Poets

Selected and Translated by Harry Mathews

André du Bouchet

Flowers

No higher,
where they settle, these blue waters! than
the first sheerness of flowers suddenly transpiring in the cold
air,
and as rugged.

But the kiss, come
by way of unevened depths where I disappear, an armful
of dustiness, into the day that awaits the sun.

They must not settle, the façade
shall revert to the stones.

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Among the flowers, even now, arched over by the cloud's heat, then, by the wind, in the midst of roads,

the cloud! colliding with what has blossomed.

If they must, to grow, sink to the level of blue,

meadow-sage,

in some road.

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Later, as the step,
at night, glimpses them, their faces taut now,
cloths level with the air!

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Level

Tomorrow, underneath earth, again (I have foundered,
coursed) the colter, as you merge with the body of the day,
props its elbows

on the wind.

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The Dusty Foot

Between us,
I have seen the air like, to the haphazard foot, the heat
of the motion of the sun.
Pure earth. Pure glacier. By the
opening path where today you return.

"But my head is under the roads.
Grounded in the same house."

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As day comes to the ear, I saw it.

On the ground, here, rebounding,
let it
on the ice of these soils, with the dry clasp that presses
it, then, be encompassed.

In the same locked house, if, ahead of us, it flares,
thirst.

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More distant than the sun,
what in us was entrusted to us (haystack in the compact frame)
has receded.

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Deep dust grows cool.

Our step, if it more than brushes it, being wrenched, daylight, then. Outside us, as at the fire's return it will have wrapped itself in this wind.

Into the bed of dusts that, far above, keep daylight, everything is gathered.

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Wind,
at the dusty foot —from one to the other,
light-sprinkled.

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Jacques Dupin

Lichens

1

Even if the mountain burns itself out, even if the survivors slaughter one another—shepherd, sleep. No matter where. I shall find you. My sleep is equal to yours. On the bright slope our herds graze. On the sheer slope our herds graze.

2

Without, burial-pits fill the beds of rivers gone under the earth. Fissuring rock is sister to splitting sky. The event precedes its auguries, bird attacks bird. Within, underground, my hands grind colors that have scarcely begun.

3

What I see and keep secret appalls me. What I speak and do not know delivers me. Does not deliver me. Will all my nights be enough to dismantle this lightning-flash? O glimpsed countenance, inexorable and pounded by the blind white air!

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4

The sheaves refuse my bonds. In this infinite unanimous discord each ear of wheat, each drop of blood speaks its language and goes its way. The torch, which lights up and shuts the abyss, is itself an abyss.

5

Drunk, having upset your plow, you took the plowshare for a star; the earth approved.

The grass is now so high that I can no longer tell if I am walking, I can no longer tell if I am alive.

Is the spent lamp less heavy?

6

Fields of stone extend as far as the eye can see, like this unbearable happiness that joins us, and does not resemble us. I belong to you. You understand me. We are blinded by the heat...

The night that expects and gratifies us must again have its expectation spoiled, if it is to be night.

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7

When walking is no longer possible, it is the foot that breaks open, not the path. You have been deceived. Light is simple. And the hills near. If by mistake I stumble against your door tonight, do not let me in. Do not let me in yet. Your absence of face is my only darkness.

8

To ascend you and, having ascended—when light no longer clings to words, and collapses and tumbles down —to ascend you again. Another peak, another stratum.

Since my fear has grown up, the mountain needs me. My chasms, my bonds, my step.

9

Vigils on the promontory. Not to come down. No longer to remain silent. Neither possession, nor passion. Coming and going in sight of everyone, in the narrow space that is enough. Vigils on the promontory to which I have no access. But whence my gaze has always leaped; and drawn. Happiness. Happiness indestructible.

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Daybreak

If your work was completed, could be complete,
Infatuated servant who covets me from so low,

Prolonging the acrid rapture
Of seeing my birth and stay
As wizard and fork, cliff and torpor...

But it is untrue that she has been in flight
For thousands of years.

My nails clinging to her black silk net
She drops me, and my forehead strikes
The enchantment of slabs.

Around us are woven and tightened
The dialects of the abyss.

Her retiary's love is terrible and prolix,
Its last mesh flashes
At the same instant as the knife.

Blended into the air, into new speech,
The hiatus of a crime is what all foundation lacks.

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"Par une allée d'iris"

By a lane of irises and scarlet mud
going down to the spring to dry it up...

but all the former wetness
clothed the rock as if
our lips had known each other
erstwhile
without the fire of the rising dew,
its dowry, numberless and vanished...

whose stubborn transparency flames
encompasses with tresses
a land recovering its wind and fire

"Reste le seul battement"

There remains only the flutter
Of minute desirable death-pangs
In the high garden once more locked.

Scansion of the dreadful murmur degrades you:
Shorten your workday, bury your tools.

"*Reste le seul battement*" and "Lichens" appeared in *Gravir* (© Gallimard), a collection of Dupin's poetry.

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Marcelin Pleynet

Three Excerpts from "Comme"

"ces matinées"

these mornings
here is a true color
like a curtain behind windowpanes
she keeps and soars these temples that do not speak

as well worry about the gray urn
held in their hands
what revolves is of a style that is exactly the colors'

"one could call it a paradox and indeed it is one where feeling
is concerned but not where sense is concerned"

as well say that those they find
suffer from that defect of vision
which makes them blind

these three dimensions in a commonplace structure
let light through and furnish nothing
but repetition
the true color that they see

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"où la lumière"

where the light comes to rest and in the flesh they brighten the
grasses
that she bites and readily calls the damp air that keeps it naked
chilled perhaps on the bank
by the overviolent light alone or wounded
when there passes and tears itself violently away
crashes on the grass.

if I look at her where the light comes to rest so many blue flecks

"Alors il imagine un paysage"

Then he imagines a landscape where I describe him, and everything that goes with it. Two parallel black lines that will never touch. On either side the black landscape. You can add light to it. What you do is not very different from what is going on.

Since we are made to meet while they are speaking It seems there is a relationship between these

It is not precisely dissension, it's a description that is unconvincing and that must constantly be restored from right to left. And we cannot distinguish the man we see from the other one, they are there. The whole difficulty is there between all of them, and this we know and it is what I am writing about from beginning to end. Two nevertheless even if the number that refers to oneness no longer matters. Two when he opens

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the book and when they catch it unawares. And each day and in that which divides the day and in this venture where what divides the day holds the two of them from a distance "as if she existed only on his threshold and was fated to disappear within them." And you must know that you imagine what this sees. Whether an alley of cypress trees, the sharp corner of a wall, the motion of its shadow on the wall. A few remarks are exchanged whose only consequence is to keep them there, to tear them away from the path that, so they think, leads to the stream and that nevertheless returns. And they do this in such a way that when those step forward these do not move. It is quite impossible for the water that passes not to be a single water, for the stream not to stop suddenly. The horizon is nearer to them than what they see.

As she walks this has bound up her hair and what was green. So you imagine this body which the movement of an arm draws sideways and bends back toward the nape of the neck, and that the trunk and thighs are elongated. The heat is what you imagine, on the hillside the air seems turned to fire, fire sinking through the air. And exactly during this moment that draws her hair, the eyes close. She will remain in this movement

bound to what holds them, the irradiation of its own true nature. Bent over the book her eyes wide-open looking at the intense image that moves across the sun and the eyes close just as everything closes that is black. (Just as in pain that is not ours none of these things can hurt.)

That which is imagined is seen, that which speaks out during the night, the slow shifting of memory. And at once this crime becomes a dream, starts to speak when this turns back like an arrow, here, on account of it. At the moment when, like this sun that in the dream was neither warm nor bright, she withdraws. It seems we can follow her track across the expanse that, further on, the body which she is to abandon, and which it holds on to like a father's... that for which all

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speech searches, in this moment when whatever is walking seems silhouetted against the horizon upon us suddenly.

This entire soundscape, the room still overgrown by black grass, this body there opened out from inside to outside in a nocturnal gush, eyes no doubt closed thinking that the ocean driven off by these words recedes: When in fact they all are walking a little farther on.

(Side by side, shoulder touching shoulder on this too narrow path, between these two woods of green and blue firs.) And if he tries to see them sooner, but what can he be imagining, he didn't know her, she is pursued by them. What he thinks comprehends this frenzy they all share and in which every word opens out like its own desire. Near you perhaps with you, looking at her without seeing her, he follows it within another but what can he be thinking, she doesn't know them.

Since he is following her, they carry a book, crossing the square and since they take her to be 16 years old... and no doubt she was then 16 years old since they are the same age. The square is crossed, she touches him. They return. They all walk along a wall. After the rain at this moment of the afternoon that seems to recede... she crosses the city, they recall it, this would recall it... They cross the street and as if through black things—what you imagine—he remembers—these forget—as it is seen by them—as he never stops seeing her (closing his eyes he no longer sees them.) No doubt, no doubt that at this moment while they are walking side by side, he is still following her, no doubt she recalls it—they carry her. And that which is not sufficient... Others look at her in this city, she (perhaps) is 16 years old, perhaps when the street is crossed others perhaps look at them, in this architecture.

So what you imagine here, the colors holding her and how it moves forward, seriously in fact, and how suddenly the landscape near her moves, collapses in this gray field... and

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everything that cannot be written, to no use, is what no doubt follows her, what she touches when they turn around, as you imagine her. Each time, alone. Thus

Thus like two parallel black lines, every venture comprehends them all, what appears above having its resemblance in her lineament which even so I could never recopy, and which continues as a parallel, separate resemblance.

He thinks that in a moment they may rise up, (as far as I know) against this tree, in this early afternoon... and that I turn away... That the shadow of poplars covers the meadow, as she is held in front of me in this moment when the stream seems ready to cover, to bear away. And since she cries out, and since hitting seems necessary urgent, if the breach is accomplished with sufficient strength... if the meeting is accomplished... if I find them in this late afternoon walking side by side... separate... and since I find myself at their side, with those near, these separate. Thus the entire book creates itself out of chance encounters with that which cannot be separated and which speaks. The entire book like a single encounter with that which cannot be limited to the book and which the book holds, as it holds them united on this page justifying poetry prose. On this country path where all of them are walking this sunny afternoon.

From one line to the other on the same path and she bent over looking and as in suffering or behind the shadow that separates the bank a crumpled image enthrals them in this sleep... or a landscape's continuation (this cannot be written). This retains what is visible and is sometimes in what I see, what is stressed and is undone where the light comes to rest. From a distance it senses rather than sees this alley of cypress trees, the corner of the wall, the shutters closed on empty rooms, this couple that is separating. He senses rather than hears the words exchanged outside this house. He is still convinced that all this could be said quite differently, that it is not what he is saying, that they aren't saying anything, that

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the others aren't speaking, wandering outside this village without knowing whether they will recognize one another, or whether they wouldn't be better off if they separated if *they* made an end of it. The word is always the same, but not what they speak, not what makes them anxious, the word is always the same and now and then an equal distance appears, not elsewhere, nor in the gaze... nonetheless and since thought names them with these penstrokes / brought into the open as appearance, where thought takes flight and begins.

Near it at the edge of this road while the sun rises on either side.

They cross the square, he sees her. I rediscover her walking as I write. The poem of course would cast a kind of light as it were on what is happening, if the square is crossed, if she crosses the page, turns, comes back toward him, touches them, turns, leaves it when she crosses the square... that this stops her comes back toward them, turns back touches her, clasps her against him, realizing that this desire, this pain that he inflicts on them is for her like the pain that passes through her when running they swerve from the wall and speak, speak again, much too much in fact, repeating this word each time it touches her.

At the edge of this road they all form a single shadow, a moment, then she gets up, wishing there was a wall separating them. As he imagines himself walking along a wall full of doors of windows, turning back impatient, being made impatient.

She would be with him in this pain he inflicts on it, there inseparable, he remembers. What I no longer see in front of you disappears, and as we meet again in front of you where I no longer see the city run through with a color of pine on either side of you, a little farther, on the violet-blue of the cobblestones. And you are walking a little farther in front of the garrulous façade while the wall makes a sign that falls like

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a conspicuous color they get up and with a movement of her arm point out the house in the distance.

While the light rises they sense rather than see this woman crossing the square and coming toward him while she makes a sign to him to step aside if I look at it where the light comes to rest like so many blue flecks. As he imagines himself walking along this wall looking for an aperture, sensing behind the shut windows and doors vast yellow or white rooms... a single cell, which light or shadow no doubt divides sometimes like a wall.

Outside they are prisoners who point out what is only too visibly united as two shadows in this landscape that he imagines, night and dampness hold them

so what you imagine occurs here, just as well, and as suddenly morning and evening discovered together

See author's note, p. 200.

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Denis Roche

Eros Possessed : a play

facing

Demonstrative act of Love: 1st chance

put

"I had hoped to satisfy my love for her a little by giving her a bouquet; it was a complete waste of time. Such a thing is possible only through literature or copulation. I write this not because it is new to me, but because perhaps it is a good thing to put warnings frequently into writing."
So Kafka speaks of his evenings at the theater and of his admiration for the actress Madame Tschissik. *Journals*, November 5, 1911.

... and Bielfeld—in 1768—defined poetry as the *art of expressing thoughts by means of fictions...*

This remarkable definition can be found in his work *Les Premiers traits de l'érudition universelle*. Edgar Allan Poe draws attention to it in *Marginalia*, CLIV.

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Demonstrative act of Love: 1st chance

out of the seething of the tool, which re-
sembles this ill-fated sentence of our suicide
Together, at The Rose Sword—green sign, you
See a little Sologne greenery in it—,
...not daring to give heroin to the worms lest
Any die of such an error of husbandry:

A flower'd gown that raises a Love at each step
Ravishes delectable charms from our eyes; and this
Thigh as round as Venus' ... A thousand beauties,
A thousand living charms, and ornaments, you replace but with
Hindrances!... And this darling slipper, that
Encloses a foot like Hebe's or Venus', alluring as it
Is, can it match her naked grace?...
You lied about it, naked flower of my mouth, the
Beans and the crazy women's bubbles, your ass perfectly
Upright performs toward me a number of circumlocutions
(useless today) having the shape of corkscrews.

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facing the parenthesis:

For Love is an affection
That finds the heart through th' eyes,
Then, by a way of fluxion,
Runs out between the thighs.

at the same time— —,
Agrippa d'Aubigné wrote *Les Aventures du baron Foeneste.*
That is:

Scarce can the Poet interprete euerie thinge, what the eie discouers is a greate multitude of alpine Souldiers sorely busyed under the sunne with sewing up the slashes in their doublets made after the fashion, with thawing their double mustachios—here you see uarlets shooing a Damsel who hath her girdle twixt nauel and teates.

Double fiction: the writer and his time. The proof is that it has already been written by everyone. Back to the single fiction.

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Demonstrative act of Love: 2nd chance

_____that
With the edges of a cotton cloth I wiped
The still-sharp weapon of your stink:

(here the quotation from Mathurin Régnier)

The more accessible wheat of the painters was thor-
oughly pillaged when we stood up again.
What poetry, finally shoved into a hole of
Clay, dislikes the skirts from which cork-
screws are made?—"*Would you grant me one*
Delight, milady?" "*Oh yes, oh yes.*"
"*To yield that pair...*" "*I know, I know...*"
It doesn't matter if I add court manners,
Spheres, Pulcinellas, or if needed the
Swing itself as a token of puritan bilge,
Poetry, concerning a dairymaid, or the leap that
A friar would make upon her, would never for all that
Be adorned with the raiment I lent you when it's
Entirely up to me to resume the attack *(sic)*.

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Demonstrative act of Love: immed. after the 2nd chance

When one has just written sentences like those
On the preceding page *I am with the twigs*
My most up-to-date mistress thinking she will hoard my
Doubt as the pretext for a mill in an
In an ancient countryside (if you can get used to the idea
Of paper and ink in the Chinese empire
At a time more ancient than the
Mill would have been) *I fill the instrument of this wonder*
With a large number of incentives familiar to my
Imagination. Familiar, while the foot is cautious-
ly placed on the rim of the bathtub, the left hand
Lowering the washcloth toward the folds that are
At the level of her stomach. Etc. Of course; otherwise
Who cares, about greenery or the fountain?
No longer would it matter at all what I had to tell you
When I embraced your legs. Advice in brief: continue
With the next title

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Interlude between chances: of vowels and erosion

"On the 20th I confess to finding my condition that of one
Dead." *Ambrosia of the enchanting poem*, like
Luggage that the innkeeper prepares to remove,
Receives a certain direct glint. Thunder
Hardly came. I reconsider the earth's
Progression (this time abrupt), that which was left
Fallow that by which people died where there remain
Apricot-trees where death but not theirs falls
Impressed in the peas place of arrests grav-
And so forth, speech being nothing.
Could fatigue be only a kind of
Discipline? That might blind me when I
Write. The girls who are your beauty's neighbors
Might laugh over our exchange not seeing
That our hands create ambrosia of the en-
chanting poem———————.

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for certain sets of acts, not less than human, a sequence impossible to recreate backward, which adds the interest of organic progression to the time used in the present description.

here put the following text, anonymous 17th-century English:

"She drinks! She drinks! Behold the Lady without peer! For her it is only water, but for you it is flame: thus fire is water, and water fire, in succession and alternately; so that the same stream of water all at once cools and burns."

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—"*Jouy Lace*"★ or "*Of the Triumph*"

I can find nothing more certain than the connection
Between this flyleaf mounted on Jouy linen
And the provocative idea of plumping of which Littré
Says that there is a *vat filled with acid solution*
in which the tanner plumps his skins to
Distend them. D'Estrevallières who, when she abandoned
fornication, withdrew to her property at Had,
dresses with her back toward me so that
I at once admire her flanks and the perspective of
Lime-trees. The smell of yellow blossoms, her own smell,
And the chips of antique cloth plainly
Require that I maintain a strict stance which the
Dictionary, falling, does not break. What
Did I make of it all but an aerial leap that
Brings me to a cleared area of the room
Where the cloth has been torn away my throat proceeding
Among other blossoms, coming and going thickly.

★ "*le Passement de Jouy.*" *Passement* = lace; passage; plumping (of leather). Jouy = the town; also *joui*, "having come."

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After prolonged exposure to the sun, curtain.

But my tender, confounding speech, where worse
Existence "the second tankard tells him that
It's true," on my ruin's inclination, my
Absolution. Modest angler, words foul,
Designation foul, only a bewitching mus-
ic survives near me. Its decease
Settled, the tune that imagines my slow ascension
Toward the meadows of its being, the chance
Encounter of the medley of this florid vision
(colors of horses, of the jugs on stage)
And my disease, all this overtakes my step
Without presumption, the hyperbola, my straddling
Balcony to green balcony, in a straight line I
Extend myself like the landscape toward a new
Shipment for burial, in any case toward her grave.
(Detumescence-smile)

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A Liberal Education

Mordecai Richler

Joyce phoned him at the office. Before she could get a word out, he said, "If you ask me, almost all of Doug's problems can be traced to that bloody school."

"Would you rather that he was educated as you were?"

Mortimer had been to Upper Canada College. "I don't see why not."

"Full of repressions and establishment lies."

Establishment. Camp. WASP. She had all the bloody modish words.

"Well I—"

"We'll discuss it later. Just please please don't be late for the rehearsal."

Mortimer had only been invited to the rehearsal for the Christmas play because he was in publishing and Dr. Booker, the founder, wanted Oriole to do a book about Beatrice Webb House. Drama was taught at the school by a Miss Lilian Tanner, who had formerly been with Joan Littlewood's bouncy group. A tall, willowy young lady, Miss Tanner wore her long black hair loose, a CND button riding her scrappy bosom. She assured Mortimer he was a most welcome visitor to her modest little workshop. Mortimer curled into a seat in the rear of the auditorium, trying to appear as unobtrusive as possible. He was only half-attentive to begin with, reconciled

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to an afternoon of tedium larded with cuteness.

"We have a visitor this afternoon, class," Miss Tanner began sweetly, "Mr. Mortimer Griffin of Oriole Press."

Curly-haired heads, gorgeous pig-tailed heads, whipped around; everybody giggly.

"Now all together, class..."

"GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. GRIFFIN."

Mortimer waved, unaccountably elated.

"Settle down now," Miss Tanner demanded, rapping her ruler against the desk. "Settle down, I said."

The class came to order.

"Now this play that we are going to perform for the Christmas concert was written by...class?"

"A marquis!"

"Bang on!" Miss Tanner smiled, flushed with old-fashioned pride in her charges, and then she pointed her ruler at a rosy-cheeked boy. "What's a marquis, Tony?"

"What hangs outside the Royal Court Theatre."

"No, no, darling."

There were titters all around. Mortimer laughed himself, covering his mouth with his hand.

"That's a marquee. This is a marquis. A—"

A little girl bobbed up, waving her arms. Golden head, red ribbons. "A French nobleman!"

"Righty-ho! And what do we know about him...class?"

A boy began to jump up and down. Miss Tanner pointed her ruler at him.

"They put him in prison."

"Yes. Anybody know why?"

Everybody began to call out at once.

"Order! Order!" Miss Tanner demanded. "Whatever will Mr. Griffin think of us?"

Giggles again.

"You have a go, Harriet. Why was the marquis put in prison?"

"Because he was absolutely super."

"Mmm..."

"*And such a truth-teller.*"

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"Yes. Any other reasons...Gerald?"

"Because the puritans were scared of him."

"Correct. And what else do we know about the marquis?"

"Me, me!"

"No, me, Miss. Please!"

"Eeney-meeney-miney-mo," Miss Tanner said, waving her ruler, "catch a bigot by the toe...Frances!"

"That he was the freest spirit what ever lived."

"*Who* ever lived. Who, dear. And who said that?"

"Apollinaire."

"Jolly good. Anything else...Doug?"

"Um, he cut through the banality of everyday life."

"Indeed he did. And who said that?"

"Jean Genet."

"No."

"Hugh Heffner," another voice cried.

"Dear me, that's not even warm."

"Simone de Beauvoir."

"Right. And who is she?"

"A writer."

"Good. Very good. Anybody know anything else about the marquis?"

"He was in the Bastille and then in another place called Charenton."

"Yes. All together, class...Charenton."

"CHARENTON."

"Anything else?"

Frances jumped up again. "I know. Please, Miss Tanner. Please, me."

"Go ahead, darling."

"He had a very, very, very big member."

"Yes indeed. And—"

But now Frances' elder brother, Jimmy, leaped to his feet, interrupting. "Like Mummy's new friend," he said.

Shrieks. Laughter. Miss Tanner's face reddened, for the first time she stamped her foot. "Now I don't like that, Jimmy. I don't like that one bit."

"Sorry, Miss Tanner."

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"That's tittle-tattle, isn't it?"

"Yes, Miss Tanner."

"We mustn't tittle-tattle on one another here."

"...sorry..."

"And now," Miss Tanner said, stepping up to the blackboard, "can anyone give me another word for member?"

"COCK," came a little girl's shout, and Miss Tanner wrote it down.

"Beezer."

"PWICK."

"Male organ."

"PENIS."

"Hard-on."

Miss Tanner looked dubious. She frowned. "Not always," she said, and she didn't write it down.

"FUCKING-MACHINE."

"*Putz*."

"You're being sectarian again, Monty," Miss Tanner said, somewhat irritated.

"Joy-stick."

A pause.

"Anybody else?" Miss Tanner asked.

"Hot rod."

"Mmm. Dodgey," Miss Tanner said, but she wrote it down on the blackboard, adding a question mark. "Anybody else?"

"Yes," a squeaky voice cried, now that her back was turned.

"Teakettle."

Miss Tanner whirled around, outraged. "*Who said that?*" she demanded.

Silence.

"Well, I never. I want to know who said that. *Immediately*."

No answer.

"Very well, then. No rehearsal," she said, sitting down and tapping her foot. "We are simply going to sit here and sit here and sit here until who ever said that owns up."

Nothing.

"I'm sorry about this fuck-up, Mr. Griffin. It's most embarrassing."

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Mortimer shrugged.

"I'm waiting, class."

Finally a fat squinting boy came tearfully to his feet. "It was me, Miss Tanner," he said in a small voice. "I said teakettle."

"Would you be good enough to tell us why, Reggie?"

"...when my nanny... I mean my little brother's nanny, um, takes us, ah, out..."

"Speak up, please."

"When my nanny takes me, um, us... to Fortnum's for tea, well before I sit down she always asks us do we, do..." Reggie's head hung low; he paused, swallowing his tears, "...do I have to water my teakettle."

"Well. Well, well. I see," Miss Tanner said severely. "Class, can anyone tell me what Reggie's nanny is?"

"A prude!"

"Repressed!"

"Victorian!"

"All together now."

"REGGIE'S NANNY IS A DRY CUNT!"

"She is against...class?"

"Life-force."

"And?"

"Pleasure!"

"RIGHT. *And truth-sayers.* Remember that. Because it's sexually repressed bitches like Reggie's nanny who put truth-sayers like the marquis in prison."

The class was enormously impressed.

"May I sit down now?" Reggie asked.

"Sit down, what?"

"Sit down, please, Miss Tanner?"

"Yes, Reggie. You may sit down."

At which point Mortimer slipped out of the rear exit of the auditorium, without waiting to see a run-through of the play, without even finding out what play they were doing.

"Excuse me, beg your pardon," Mortimer muttered, leading

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Joyce and Agnes Laura Ryerson to their seats in the Beatrice Webb auditorium, which was gaily tricked out with reams of colored ribbons, balloons, and mistletoe for the Christmas play. A rosy-cheeked boy skipped across the stage waving a placard which read: PHILOSOPHY IN THE BEDROOM. He was followed by a giggly, plump ten-year-old girl with another placard: DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

Mortimer focused on the stage, where four nude ten-year-olds (two boys, two girls) were frolicking on an enormous bed. The effect was comic, making Mortimer recall an old *Saturday Evening Post* cover by Norman Rockwell which had a freckled little girl sitting at her mother's dressing table, the gap between her teeth showing as she puckered her lips to try on her mother's lipstick.

The boy playing Dolmance said, "I see but one way to terminate this ridiculous ceremony: look here, Chevalier, we are educating this pretty girl, we are teaching her all a little girl of her age should know and, the better to instruct her, we join—we join—we join—"

"Some practice to theory," the prompter hissed.

"—some practice to theory. She must have a tableau dressed for her: it must feature a prick—"

"Louder, please," a parent behind Mortimer called out.

"—a prick discharging, that's where presently we are; would you like to serve as a model?"

The Chevalier de Mirvel, played by a big black West Indian boy whom the audience desperately wanted to do well, responded, biting back his laughter, "Surely, the proposal is too flattering to refuse, and Mademoiselle has the charms that will quickly guarantee the desired lesson's effects."

Madame de Saint-Ange, a gawky child, all ribs and knees it seemed, squealed, "Then let's go on: to work!"

Which was when they fell to wrestling on the bed, the Chevalier de Mirvel, to judge by his laughter, being the most ticklish of the four.

"Oh, indeed," Eugenie hollered, "'tis too much, you abuse my inexperience to such a degree..."

The West Indian boy kissed Eugenie.

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"Smack, smack," Dolmance called out, for Miss Tanner had encouraged them to improvise.

"Here comes the mushy stuff," Madame de Saint-Ange pitched in, alienating herself from her part. She was, after all, only playing Madame de Saint-Ange. For real, as Miss Tanner had explained, she was Judy Faversham.

"Oh, God!" the West Indian boy hollered. "What fresh, what sweet attractions!"

Agnes Laura Ryerson's face went the color of ashes. Behind Mortimer, a man demanded gruffly of his wife, "When does Gerald come on stage?"

"Quiet, James."

Yet another father voiced his displeasure. "There aren't enough parts."

"It's a classic, Cyril."

"All the same, it's a school play. There should be more parts. It's jolly unfair to the other children."

Mortimer's attention was gripped by the free-for-all on stage. Puzzling over the nude, goose-pimply children entwined on the bed, he wondered, the Chevalier de Mirvel aside, which leg, what ribcage, belonged to whom. Dolmance squealed: "I have seen girls younger than this sustain still more massy pricks: with courage and patience life's greatest obstacles are surmounted—"

"Here come the clichés," the man behind Mortimer said, groaning.

"—'Tis madness to think one must have a child deflowered by only very small pricks. I hold the contrary view, that a virgin shoud be delivered to none but the vastest engines to be had..."

Suddenly the stage lights dimmed and the bed was abandoned to the Chevalier de Mirvel and Eugenie. Secondary lights brightened and behind the free-floating gauze that formed the rear bedroom wall there magically loomed the boys and girls of the second form, Doug's form, cupids as it were, humming a nervy, bouncy tune and carrying flickering, star-shaped lights. There was enthusiastic applause and only one harsh cry of "Derivative!" from the man behind Mortimer,

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as the kids filed onstage and formed a circle round the bed, where the Chevalier de Mirvel and Eugenie still tussled. Then, taking the audience completely by surprise, a fairy godmother, wearing a tall pointed hat, all sparkly and wound round and round in shimmering blue chiffon, was suspended in mid-air over the bed. The fairy godmother was none other than Mr. Yasha Krashinsky, who taught Expressive Movement at Beatrice Webb House.

Deafening applause greeted the rotund, dangling Yasha Krashinsky, a touching measure of support, as it was widely known that he had soon to appear at Old Bailey, charged with importuning outside Covent Garden. While the second form choir hummed, Yasha Krashinsky chanted: "Le Chevalier de Mirvel is wilting. Our fair Eugenie is fading fast. They will only make it, grownups, if you believe in the cure-all powers of the orgasm. Grownups, do you believe in the orgasm?"

"Yes!"

The pitch of the humming heightened. Yasha Krashinsky chanted: "The young virgin and her lover cannot hear you. Louder, grownups. Do you believe in the orgasm?"

"YES! YES! YES!"

Blackness on stage. The throbbing of drums. Squeals from the bed. One of the boys from the second form choir took a step forward, raised his arms aloft, and shouted: "Hip! Hip!"

"HURRAH!" returned the choir.

"Hip! Hip!"

"HURRAH!"

A spotlight picked out the fairy godmother, Yasha Krashinsky, as he was lowered with a clunk onstage, and poured a flask of red paint into a bucket.

"EUGENIE IS A WOMAN NOW," the choir sang to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance." "EUGENIE IS A WOMAN NOW."

Once the play was done, the children skipped off to the dining hall, where choc-ices, a conjurer, and a Popeye cartoon show awaited them. The adults remained in the auditorium, where they were served *vin rosé* and cheese squares. Dr. Booker, Yasha Krashinsky, and finally Miss Lilian Tanner

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mounted the stage to shouts of bravo, and the meeting was called to order. Mortimer was immensely encouraged to discover that he was not alone in being rather put off by the Beatrice Webb House production of *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. He was in a minority, a reactionary minority, but he was not alone. As the meeting progressed beyond niceties, Mortimer was heartened to see other parents come to the boil. The play was not the issue. It was, however, symptomatic of what some parents felt had come to ail the school.

Francis Wharton, the enlightened TV producer, began by saying he had always voted socialist; he deplored censorship in any shape or form, on either side of the so-called Iron Curtain; Victorian double standards were anathema to him; but all the same he thought it a bit much that just because his thirteen-year-old daughter was the only girl in the fifth form to stop at petting—

"Shame," somebody called out.

—*heavy petting*—

The objector shrugged, unimpressed.

—was no reason for her to come home with a scarlet T for Tease painted on her bosom.

This brought Lady Gillian Horsham, the Oxfam organizer, to her feet. Lady Horsham wished for more colored neighbors in Lowndes Square. She had, she said, found the play on the twee side here and there, but, on balance, most imaginative.

"Yes, yes," Dr. Booker interrupted bitingly, "but?"

Lady Horsham explained that her daughter, also in the fifth form, but not so cripplingly inhibited as the previous speaker's child—

"Hear! Hear!"

—had already been to the London Clinic to be fitted with a diaphragm.

"That's the stuff!"

"Good girl!"

But, she continued, but, wasn't it all rather premature? Not, mind you, that she was a prude. But, as they were all socialists, it seemed to her irresponsible that while their sisters in Africa

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and India were in such desperate need of diaphragms—

"Not germane," somebody hollered.

Yes, it was germane, Lady Horsham continued. But look at it another way, if you must. Parents were already overburdened with spiraling fees, the cost of summer and winter uniforms, hockey sticks, cricket bats, and whatnot. Was it fair that they should now also have to fork out for new diaphragms each term as, let's face it, these were growing girls? Couldn't the girls of the fifth form, without psychological damage—

"Your question, please?"

—without risk, practice *coitus interruptus?*

"Spoil-sport!"

"Reactionary!"

Dr. Booker beamed at his people, gesturing for silence. "If I may make a positive point, there is no reason why the tuck shop co-op, which already sells uniforms the girls have outgrown to younger students, could not also dispose of diaphragms that have begun to pinch, *so long as the transaction was not tarnished by the profit motive.*"

Next to speak up, Tony Latham, the outspoken Labour backbencher, explained that while it certainly did not trouble him personally that his boy masturbated daily, immediately following the Little Fibber Bra commercials on ITV, it was quite another matter when his parents, up from the country, were visiting. Latham's parents, it was necessary to understand, were the product of a more inhibited, censorious age: it distressed them, rather, to see their only grandchild playing with himself on the carpet, while they were taking tea.

"Your question, Mr. Latham?"

Could it be put to Yasha Krashinsky, overworked as he is, that he keep the boys for five minutes after Expressive Movement class, and have them masturbate before they come home?

"But I do," Yasha put in touchily. "I do, my dear chap."

Other, more uncompromisingly radical parents now demanded their say. There could be no backsliding at Beatrice Webb House. "You begin," a lady said, "by forbidding mas-

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turbation in certain rooms or outside prescribed hours and next thing you know the children, our children, are driven back into locked toilets to seek their pleasure, and still worse have developed a sense of guilt about auto-stimulation."

"Or," another mother said, looking directly at Lady Horsham, "you allow one greedy-guts in the fourth form to hold on to her precious little hymen and next thing out goes fucking in the afternoon."

Some compromises were grudgingly agreed to. Diaphragms, for instance, would be made optional until a girl reached the sixth form. On the other hand, Dr. Booker absolutely refused to stream girls into classes of those who did and those who didn't. It would be heartless, he said feelingly, to stamp a girl of twelve frigid for the rest of her life. Some, if not all, late developers might grow up to surpass seemingly more avid girls in sexual appetite.

There followed a long and heated discussion on the play, its larger meanings within meanings, and then a debate on Beatrice Webb House finances, co-op shares, and needs and plans for the future. Dr. Booker received a standing ovation at the end.

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Kenneth Koch

Literary Disputations

Olympia! The train chugs in. Old Mr.
Dog. The Donizetti.
Your poetry is all "culture poetry"
Said Frogs. You don't know the
Meaning of crap. I hugged the
Florence railway station
At mid-day. I love those
Things: old prunes, whose
Parents have forgiven to take
The top off, and young
Surgeons, as well—no, that's sturgeons; and
Frogs (a hay needle in the wind)
Claims he has to admit
It is coming in on a fre-
Quency
He doesn't know about.
With
His stature he
Should be more "arty" I
Think! hoom! porcelain
Cup of coffee!

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La Diminuzione Dalla Mamma

La mia mamma
Nel tempo in cui ero bambino
Fu una donna
Molto grande e molto bella
Allora che ora
E miniscula
Come una cosa
Che si vedrebbe dalla finestra
Di un palazzo, verso la sera,
Come di quest'altezza
Potrebbe sembrare una dente
Di una sconosciuta
Nell'aria bruna di Firenze.

Poem

The thing
to do
Is organize
The sea
So boats will
Automatically float
To their destinations.
Ah, the Greeks
Thought of that!
Well, what if
They
Did? We have no
Gods
Of the winds!
And therefore
Must use
Science!

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Lasting Peace

The Schubert is flying
O no crazy Alaska
Of bathing seams,
The middles are dying
Of untarnished ice cream
O Alaska Alaska

Into my huge kiss
Brilliancy-and-gum-drops,
The latter day Saints
Have covered me with paints,
In the margin of bus stops
And the hotel-bows of bliss.

A major crisis are lips
In the sea, the clasped welfare
Of him, him,
Virginia Dare!
"I've the classicism of trips
Everywhere that we swim."

Vanish and volunteers,
Of conduct, a truce
About the piers,
The lanterns un-Palestine,
Mushrooms as define
The mid, via sun, to coffee's use.

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Ten Films

1. Because

Scene 1. Ted and Sally on a porch overlooking the water in Nice or some other resort. The scene is all yellow and green.

Scene 2. City, street scene. All purple.

SUBTITLES: So they moved. In the place where they moved, everything was purple. And they were happy.

Scene 3. Yellow scene. A nursery. Everyone is happy. There are children. Smoking orange and blue SUBTITLE comes on and says "END."

2. The Color Game

The blank screen changes from one solid color to another in the following order: WHITE, GREEN, VIOLET, RED, GREEN, BLUE. This sequence is kept up as long as desired. Spoken words accompany the colors some of the time: on every fifth occurrence of WHITE, the words "The box of Wheaties" are heard; on every second occurrence of GREEN, there is laughter; on every third occurrence of BLUE, one hears the words, "Don't take me off this boat at Corfu—No!"

3. Mountains and Electricity

Panorama of mountains.
A voice tells the story of electricity.
At the end everything becomes dark red.

4. Sheep Harbour

The scene is a harbour, filled with sheep (not in the water, but occupying all the land area).
The end.

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5. Oval Gold

The scene shows a huge golden oval.
A man reads aloud the menu for the day. The oval sways slightly as things it likes are mentioned.
End.

6. Moby Dick

Against a beautiful deep blue background which serves as a fairly narrow frame around it are exposed one by one selected pages of Melville's *Moby Dick*. There should be music (soft), and the book should sway just the tiniest bit, as if blown by a light and gentle spring breeze. Background changes to orange and yellow. End.

7. L'Ecole normale

Various architectural aspects of an ugly école normale are surveyed by the camera while a violin plays something fairly raucous and weeping (perhaps something Russian?). The color of everything is yellow.

8. The Cemetery

The camera plays on tombs, graves, trees, etc.
A voice says: This is the cemetery.
Then there are jangling sounds of something going wrong with the projector. The film ends. Inside the theater it should start snowing.

9. The Scotty Dog

Various scenes of the life of my Scotty, Andrew, are shown: he runs about, puts his rubber mouse in his food dish, etc. Meanwhile a text is read, about the construction of the buildings on the Acropolis in Athens. The text should be dramatic and should be accompanied by an appropriately rising and dramatic music. End.

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10. The Apple

The camera follows an APPLE as it rolls along the floor of a room, falls down a grating, and ends up rolling along in the snow outside. A SONG accompanies the action enthusiastically. This song, for example:

Here's the apple as it rolls along
The floor—it seems to sing a song,
What's more
It's in danger, the apple is in trouble,
Just a bubble
Of doubt must cross its mind—
Are apples blind?
In any case
As it proceeds to roll along
Over the floor,
Look—it may hit the chair legs, but no more,
We need not fear that, it evades them and goes on—
To hit the table? No!—goes on
Across the slightly not level floor,
But here, alas!
Apple green and white and red
Your head
You may injure—
Oh beware, watch out—
Yes—no—oh, yes—
The apple has fallen in the grate—
Good-bye! But no, it continues to go along,
And now we see it's fallen outside—
Aren't you cold, apple?
In the snow,
And it continues,
Our green and red and white, to go
ROLLING ALONG!

(End.)

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Except for the Sickness I'm Quite Healthy Now. You Can Believe That.

Thomas Glynn

This morning a man came to my door and asked if I had taken a bath. I told him I was an artist and he left. I called Sinkowiz and asked him what that meant but he didn't know. I like to know what things mean, their deeper significance. So then I asked my slum landlord, Solomon Golub, but he only lied and said it was the man from the water department. Someday I'll tell you about Golub, king of the slum landlords, but not now. Not with the pain I've got.

Funny how a room can turn around. I mean you can stand in one place, with your feet on solid floor, and the room can spin around like a top. Ever watch colors then? Red, green, violet, they all turn into blue. The pain helps and then sometimes when I'm not on my feet the paints will change colors and tubes and those goddam rats are partial to navy blue, they eat right through the tubes, metal, plastic and all and then gorge on the paint.

Stark came over last night and I showed him my new picture. He said it was all right except for the red. He says that just to gall me, Stark does. I say what red and he says there and points to a place which is blue and I say that's blue and

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he says red. Stark! What does he know. He can't even walk on the ground. If you watch him closely you see that he walks on air. Two inches of air. How can anybody who walks on air know anything about painting? Still, I ask him, sucker that I am. Lately I am asking more people like that. Even Golub, who likes art if it can cover up a bad hole in the wall. Next time you see Stark, look at his pants. They come down over his heels, brushing the ground. How can anyone tell he's walking on air if his pants are too long and touch the ground? He tries to hide it. He's embarrassed about walking on air.

Stark sews. He has a showing at the Stampfli of old sheets. They're all stained, his sheets. Also, a showing of laundry tickets at the Almalfi.

Did you ever see Stark and Golub argue? Stark is five feet four and Golub is five feet six. But with Stark two inches off the ground he comes up level to Golub. They stand and shout, mouth to mouth, and Golub puts his hands on Stark's shoulders and pushes him the remaining two inches down to the ground, but unless he keeps his hands there Stark just pops up again, crew cut to crew cut with Golub. Being artists, they both argue economics. Stark lives below me, a tenant of madman Golub. Golub is trying to put hot water in our lofts so he can raise the rent. Each day the plumbers come, and each night Stark and I are busy with pipe wrenches undoing their work. Once the hot water is in and running the rent goes up. So far we are even with the plumbers, but Golub is thinking of adding more to keep ahead. That's Golub. Always thinking.

Another thing about blue. My model has varicose veins which fascinate me. Did you ever see a really good showing? I don't mean the beginnings, those immature spiderwebs with their picky little microscopic traces. I'm talking about your great over-hanging ropes, your great knotted, clotted masses of bulging misshappen inoperative veins that are congealed like wet cotton. What shades of blue! From dark to light, sea to sky, fire to ice. The picture I'm working on now, with my model bent over so that from the rear I can see her patch, is all varicose vein. Title: Varicose Veins at Sunrise. I keep her

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standing all day in a tub of cold water. It brings texture, adds depth to the blue tubes. She's fifty-three, afraid I'll fire her and get a younger girl. I talk about breasts that stay up and flesh that holds together and she breaks down, blubbering. But I wouldn't have a younger model. Give me the flesh that shifts, the breasts that sag!

Snow is blue, and when you walk on snow that's blue on blue, but of course Stark doesn't make any tracks when he walks so he can't know what I'm talking about. But snow is pale blue really, the color of chipped china or faded blotters. I thought of that yesterday during the heat wave. If I feel up to it, and the pain isn't so bad, I put snow in my pictures, lots of fat flakes with a footprint or two. If Jenny can shiver when I paint so much the better. She has rheumatism and shivering comes easy to her. I make it simple by keeping her in a bucket of water, her large blistered feet rubbing the sides of the rusty iron tub. Sometimes if I leave a window open in the dead of winter, which I'm liable to do, it looks like a colony of mice is running underneath her skin. Then when I see her shake I get inspired and often do six or seven completed nudes in one day. Titles: Jenny Shivering in a Bucket of Water, Jenny Under Delusions of Cold, Jenny's Veins, Jenny Without Food For Three Days (and its corollary, Jenny Fainting From Lack of Food and Falling Head First into the Iron Bucket), Blue Jenny, Jenny In Between, and my big one, Jenny Jumps. The last one is the size of my wall. I wanted to do a big picture and nailed canvas to one of the walls, propping chairs and tables and ladders against it so I could hop around on my one good leg and fill the canvas with lines. I had Jenny jumping from one of the ceiling beams in the loft. I wanted to get that look people have on their face when they go through the air. Have you seen that look? It's like modeling a face in damp seersucker shorts. The mouth has this absent-minded look about it, the eyes seem to be hurricane centers. Jenny jumped, her blubber trailing behind, adding buoyancy, floating like potato angels. Jenny is all fluff and old chocolate, and when she jumps, she expands. This is art, that expansion. I'm doing a sequel to Jenny Jumps. Jenny Lands. Setting: Old broken cement, blis-

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tered sidewalk all cracks and acne, dry bones for plants and rust-red blood scattered like pandemonium seeds. In the middle, in parts, lies Jenny, full of hope, her mouth bleeding belief and the shock of the real blended miraculously into her limbs. Great stores of curious onlookers and large cities burning in the background, crucifixions and pilgrims walking, bombs exploding and lovers opening letters. The surroundings of Jenny. It will be the greatest thing I, or anybody, has done yet. It's what I've been trying to say for years.

Golub says he'll buy it to cover a hole in the wall.

I'll take praise wherever I can find it.

Stark, who should know, says Jenny Lands can hang side by side with Giambo.

I'll tell you more about Golub as soon as the pain goes away.

Golub sleeps during the day on a small canvas cot upstairs. If Stark or I feel like waking him we pound on the pipes with a monkey wrench until he stirs. With that noise he'll run out into the street thinking his building is falling down, and just to convince him we sometimes throw things out the window. Packing crates and type fonts and baby carriages with little nephews. Then he'll run to the phone booth and call the Health Department, complaining that the "Roooskeeies are coming," and he's getting the first bomb.

I don't think I told you about the pain. There are two kinds. Professional and amateur. In between is Golub. I'll talk about that later.

Half the numbers under ten are prime, so there must be a connection there somewhere. But try to tell that to Stark! I asked him about emotion in painting. I told him I thought it was a net full of feelings, some of which poked fingers and toes into the picture. All he said was that I had too much blue. Here here here and here he said, too much blue. Change this to vermilion, this to ochre, that to beige, and this to sienna. I leave him alone he kicks my paintings. I have to put ropes around him he comes into the studio. He doesn't understand blue. Paint by the stars he says. He pulls out his astrology handbook, a Carrol Richter special, mumbles some Latin names and comes up with exact dates and times when I should paint.

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Stark, floating two inches off the ground, says I should paint on the twenty-third of March at two-thirty in the afternoon, again on the twenty-fifth at seven, and then wait until the sixteenth of April when I can paint the whole day.

One day I showed him a new picture which he said was out of my horoscope and kicked a hole in it before I could hit him with my iron easel. I painted around the hole. But what can you do with a critic?

When Stark gets excited he rises, and if he's really enthusiastic about something he floats up to the ceiling. Jumping after him doesn't do any good, he'll just bob along the ceiling like a moth after cotton candy.

Remember that faggot farmboy in Nebraska who killed eleven people? I'm doing a series on him. Three-quarter profile set in plaster of Paris surrounded by a movie marquee, rerun of an old George Brent picture. Halloween death mask and magic lantern eyes under dime store plastic rims and larger than life proboscis. Munger leveling his gun and out pops a flag, *love*. I like things surrounding other things in my pictures, and I like people hiding, using masks and stepping out of dark alleys wearing capes and frightening drunks. But try to get *that* into a painting. And that's just the beginning. When you add up the trading stamps and the formica counters and the bedwetters and the high school Spanish teachers, where does that leave you? In Toledo with El Greco. The canvas isn't big enough. I'll have to block off the intersections and lay my linen in the streets, paint with dripping buckets from tenement roofs.

Stark is taking lessons to fly, so he can't understand. When you look down, what can you see? Only birdshit and slugs, if you happen to be a bird. I tell Stark, what do you want to fly for? He thinks it will help his art. When I try to explain about art he's bumping his head against the ceiling. So who can you talk to about art?

Much more on Golub later.

Sinkowiz is calling now. I think I'll tell him about the pain. Did you know the monarch butterfly will go thousands of miles just to get a good piece of ass?

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Talking to Golub after I've taken down his pipes. I take him up to my studio and show him my paintings. I flip through canvas after canvas, put slivers in my fingers, and smile. Golub is not one of your wishy-washy art owners. He buckles his shoes every morning. Buttons on his pants. Who can beat lead pipe enlightenment like that?

When Stark floats, he fills himself up like a blowfish. Huff and puff, taking in great balloons of air, inflating his cheeks. His skin distends, his face changes from purple to red to pink. He floats above our heads, a network of veins. Golub looking up.

Golub would be a hunchback if he had the choice, but lacking the will to deform he stares popeyed. I have a thing in yellow. Title: Golub Staring. I have a hole in my floor where I build most of my fires and I put him in this. There were three stages. Golub in the hole, me painting over him on the floor, and Jenny above both of us on a swing. I fixed it so Golub could look up her dress and when he did, then I had the look I wanted. I could have titled it Golub Staring Under Jenny's Dress or Golub in Discomfort, but I liked the neutral tones of Golub Staring better. His forehead is freckled, and what occupies the center of the picture is this forehead, this sandy, speckled forehead. The more I looked at his forehead the more it reminded me of a beach, so I painted it as a beach. Sand, with grey wood and broken shells and faded glass. I didn't use a brush but scraped large clumps of crusty oil on the canvas. I used paint that had dried, sticking it on in sections, like a statue. I mixed some sand in with the paint, and far off, in a wrinkle of the left brow, I had a beach city burning, concrete bunkers exploding and dog legs falling through storm clouds and old newspapers with faded ocean print spelling forgotten tragedies buried under the sand. All that was on Golub's forehead, staring up. And much more. Golub has acne, pits of flesh that insult the eyes, his adolescent blitzkrieg. These became pop bottles with lost notes inserted by myopic teenage girls who worked from dawn to dusk in glass factories dreaming of orgasms. Old bones (naturally), insect bodies blowing like dry bamboo in the Philippine wind, spittle damp

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and bubbly drawing together hundreds of grains into a small spitball. Women's liquids, deposited in secret places, harsh droppings, folded under thin straw-colored leaves and spent in quick spurts. All that was on Golub's forehead. I worked fast, in a rage, throwing paint, building this forehead up like a plaster wall. And underneath, dim but not lost, two faint firefly eyes shining through the wind, looking hopefully up at Jenny.

Sinkowiz gave me a good price for it, almost enough to pay off my lawsuit.

If Stark takes to flying too much I can't have him in my studio. I made that resolution yesterday.

The pain starts in the left leg and runs up through the right testicle like a silver wire, where it shorts over to the left ball, down the right leg where it gathers in little hair balls, which is what happens if you're not careful and swallow hair. Then the surface of the leg goes bad, and no matter how you slap it, from thigh to knee, nothing is felt, you might as well have plastic for skin. I told the doctors about it and they told me it was sciatica compounded by a pinched vein. I thanked them and paid my bill, slapping my leg, which still felt like plastic. When the pain comes I can't talk much and that's not because it hurts. Pain is squeezed out of me and coats my walls. I have an aching knee over by the window that must take up a good four square feet. It's almost an inch thick, and on bad nights it vibrates, crumbling the plaster in its tendon fingers. I sit smoking, watching it. How can I paint then, watching that wall shake, my knee ache, with such pain? Pain jumps too, and one flew out my window and landed on a bum below, crippling his other leg. Sometimes when the pain comes I try to paint my big picture, but often the walls shake so that nothing is steady.

Jenny talks with Golub and that's when I'm sure they're plotting something even though all Golub can talk about is lead pipes. And his driving tests. Golub is a great conversationalist. He fascinates. He is beyond the bore. With him it is a matter of reality, like dropping a plumb line to the center of the earth. What you find there you talk about. Golub dropped

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and found. Lead pipes and driving tests. Take your number three lead pipe, he'd say, and indeed I had already taken it the night before and dropped it out the window, letting it fall in the cellar doorway where he and I have our agreement. Did I tell you about the agreement? Take your number three lead pipe, he says, talking as if he had a cigar in his mouth. Conforms to your ASA specifications as cited in code number thirty-seven of the plumbing and heating contractors. Golub tells me all about lead pipes, about shear strengths and thread pitch, about decay factors and incessant vibration strain. I like that last one, the one about incessant vibration strain. I thought it applied somehow. To something. I let it roll around on my tongue, coating the consonants with saliva and tickling the s's on the roof of my mouth. Golub has a winner there, in *that incessant vibration strain.*

Goddam that Stark!

He's getting to act more like a bird every day. Soon as he comes in the first thing he wants to do is fly up to a rafter and drop bird shit on the forks. No manners at all and he's constantly shedding. What good is he up there, on the rafters? I brought him down one evening with my Crossman, lead pellet in the wing, because he was making tracks over my canvas.

Golub tells me about his driving lessons. What he does with the clutch and how he turns the wheel with one hand and signals with the other. Golub's feet on the pedals: small, tiny little hooves gloved in leather and reaching a delicate point at the front. Golub has weak legs and can't press the pedals hard enough, too cheap for power brakes and automatic transmission. Last Tuesday during one of his road tests he smashed into a bread truck. I got a call on the phone and rushed down, paints in hand. Used a lot of yellow and red. Noticed that when metal bends it turns yellow. Used the flat of the spatula, quick strokes like cutting turkey. Golub leaning his head through the cracked window, thoughtfully bleeding and I had a tube of vermilion that did the job nicely. I like the warm shine of vermilion, and the rich sheen before it dries. I have since tried to rework it in blue, but a certain power is missing.

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Golub fails driver's tests with alarming regularity. Stark came down from the ceiling long enough to make a suggestion. He told me to look for connections. Before I could ask him what with what, he flew back up again, and since he's out of range of the Crossman I'll have to be content with that enigmatic phrase. Typical of Stark.

I didn't tell you about my big picture yet. Invited Steinmetz up to talk about it. He's the only one left. He's a cigar store clerk downstairs and I suspect also a friend of Golub's, but what can you do when you're trapped? Steinmetz listens to me, sucking his teeth. He's good at lit matches, and just this week almost burnt down my studio. That would have gotten Stark out, but I'll have to watch Steinmetz because I think he talks to Golub. Did I ever tell you why Golub is always taking driving tests? Clutch chatter and low octane knock are second nature to him. He wishes he could get his hands greasy. Stark just dropped another egg. Two since this morning.

Steinmetz brought his mother over, and that's something even Sinkowiz won't do. His mother is Danish and smokes cigars and that's how he got his start in the business, but of course he's German. She wears long black gabardine dresses that come down to her ankles and has a small charcoal mustache at the corner of her mouth. I wanted to do a picture of her and Steinmetz, title: Steinmetz's Mother, but with him in the picture since I thought he was a part of her. All blacks and shoe-polish browns, like the one I did of Golub's feet, title: Golub's Feet on the Pedals, size eight pumps in soft calfskin, hand stitched and shivering, dancing in the air. I painted Golub's feet from underneath, to get the character, and I wanted to do the same with Steinmetz's Mother, showing old smoke and forgotten tobacco and falling folds of gabardine, locked rooms and stained books with bitter scenes, *Who is to remember this?* hanging over the drawing room like a long Danish winter night. But try to get that in. All black and brown and colors they don't have yet. Try to mix them!

Anyway I couldn't do it, working in blue now and I don't see those lips in anything but long brown rolled cadavers of tobacco wrappers.

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Golub tells me that Stark refuses to pay rent since he's a bird. I can see he thinks Stark is setting a dangerous precedent.

My big picture, the one with *everything* in, is going to be in blue. I told Sinkowiz about it and he says he's got a buyer lined up but the only one I can talk to about it now is Steinmetz's mother. I've given up on Steinmetz. He spends all his time sucking his teeth. Yesterday he swallowed two fillings, gold, and his bowel movements are watched with great eagerness.

The big picture. Everything has to be in it. I've decided to do a falling picture. Things falling. I think blue will put that across best. How big should the canvas be? Don't know. Might have to knock out a wall. What falls? Jenny, Golub's Feet, Steinmetz's Mother. But that's just a start.

I used to get invitations from Sinkowiz to go to openings, but now he feels I work best through a front. I still haven't met his mother. She wears chrome-rimmed glasses, and her face, like my leg, is plastic. I'd love to see that face, but Sinkowiz is adamant. No mother, no plastic face.

People will fall two ways in my painting. Head first or feet first. Eisenhower will fall head first, but Jenny and the Virgin Mary will fall feet first. Steinmetz's mother wanted to know if she could fall in my picture and I said yes. Not that I consider this a compromise since I'd planned to have her falling anyway. I gave her a choice of head or feet first, and she took head first. She's afraid that if she falls feet first her dress will billow up over her head. Everybody is in blue, the Duke of Windsor is in navy-blue plus fours while his wife is in sky blue tennis shorts and an off-blue polo shirt. Naturally they fall holding hands. Steinmetz came up and he wants to fall too, though he'll settle for whatever way I put him, feet or head first. He'd like to fall with his cigars. Golub wants to fall too, but he wants to fall with his driving lessons, and I told him that just people will be falling in this picture. He wants to know if he could fall with a gearshift lever in his hand, maybe a brake pedal or two. I'll have to think about that. I think I'll put Golub falling in between Mao Tse-tung and De Gaulle. He asked if he could fall in his blue serge, and I told him yes.

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Sinkowiz came up and wanted to know how the big one was coming and I told him, but he wanted to see. Funny about Sinkowiz, he never listens to words. He has ears, but I think they're sealed over on the inside. He must read lips. I think I'll have Sinkowiz falling in my picture, upside down next to Eisenhower, reading his lips. Sinkowiz would fall good. He has that look about his face, the look of someone used to falling, eyeballs detached, cheeks inflated like a parachute, hair grabbing for air. Some people are good at falling, and some not. I'll show this in my picture. My picture takes place in an elevator shaft. Everybody crowding in at the top, falling in the middle. There is no landing. Nobody ever lands. There will be arms and legs and dog heads twirling past elevator cables, some people will slide, holding onto the greased cables with bloody hands and a look of automated horror. Others will ignore the cables and fall like Buddhists burning in Saigon, arrow sure. The grabbers will reach out, twirl, shiver, and fall like animated cartwheels in a firecracker carnival. Everyone will fall in my picture. Heads of state, models, safecrackers, highway patrolmen. I'm considering other things falling. Alarm clocks and forks and crutches.

Stark came down and wants to know if he can fall, but I told him no. Then he told me I could fly if I wanted to. He told me to fill my cheeks with air and breathe fast. I tried but only my heels came off the ground. We talked about blue and Stark said that black was blue, that everything was black and that was why he was flying. He laid an egg and flew back up to the ceiling.

The painting is turning out to be larger than I thought. It already covers two walls, and everyone who sees it wants to fall in it. Jenny wants to fall in her furs and I asked if she meant that old muskrat coat she wears. Like all old people when they get upset, Jenny's nostrils flutter and go pale, the tissue drained of blood. Blue again. I told her she could fall in her furs. She's happy.

If you look towards the center of your nose and press the corner of your eye, you can see a small cornea of the visible spectrum. Newton in the Optics.

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Steinmetz's mother wanted to know why people fell and I asked her if she knew Sinkowiz's mother but she said she never associated with anyone who had a plastic face. I can see why. Her's is leather. Cracked and peeling, like a blue Michelangelo ceiling, with faint flakes that fall like flesh showers on her teacup. She takes no notice. Still, we can talk.

She speaks in blue syllables, like old river icicles. She takes one bony peeling hand and reaches inside her dress, the black gabardine crinkling like a forest fire. Fingers fumble, feeling old linen and immigrant undergarments. When she finds the word she wants, she has no hesitancy in bringing it out, holding it between her dead fish fingers like a cracked amethyst. We spent one evening talking of Japan. She attributed her old age to cigar smoking.

Did I tell you the Pope, His Holiness, is falling in my picture? To be sure. Along with the entire College of Cardinals and selected artifacts of Vatican City. They fall feet first, their robes billowing up like mushrooms. His Holiness holds a miter in one hand and a fork in the other. It is Friday and he is eating cod.

Sinkowiz came and said the picture was too big. It now covers three walls, and I have half the upper chamber of the New York State Legislature falling along with two dozen rock-and-roll stars, five respected surgeons, and ten policemen, arm in arm, who are ceremoniously trampling on a select group of Ban the Bomb demonstrators. Sinkowiz saw the last vignette and wanted to know if I was going political and I told him I would if I could. Did you ever notice the look on someone's face when they get testy? All wound up, like a rusty screw that's been worked on backwards? That's Sinkowiz. I'm having reservations about him. He talks with Golub too much, and lately is getting very commercial. Stark thinks commerce is good for art but after my last arrest I don't agree.

Jenny's teeth hurt. I told her they would. At her age what can you expect. She took them out and showed them to me. They were hurting. She has arguments with her teeth several times a day. She says they make her say things she doesn't want to say.

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I told her I'd put her teeth in the picture, falling.
Golub tried to hit me with a lead pipe.
With Sinkowiz, it's the mouth. I tried to explain that to him the other day. I told him, look Sinkowiz, your mouth is shaped like a saucer and that's why you say what you do. It may be the last we'll see of Sinkowiz. O.K. with me. Have been trusting him less since he started brushing his teeth.
Yesterday we celebrated the King of Denmark's birthday and everybody came. Steinmetz and Steinmetz's mother, Jenny, and even Golub, who brought his own control panel with him. Golub is very intent on passing his driving test. Wherever he goes he takes his steering wheel, pedals, windshield, gear shift lever, and bench seat. We had ice cream and cake and Jenny passed out party hats, shiny little elastic domes with a rubber that fit around the neck. Golub sat shifting gears and making Plymouth noises. He takes his test on a Plymouth, six cylinder, though at the present he's having clutch trouble. Stark flew down and read a poem though he's no poet. Jenny gave him a hat and he complained about the elastic. Someday I'll have to have a good talk with Stark.
Why do old men walk in the streets in winter?
Last night Sinkowiz came and knocked on my door, late at night. I had trouble with some of the chains, and at least one padlock had rusted shut, but I finally got the door open. Sinkowiz asked me if I believed in art for art's sake, and I told him I might. Who knows? He said if I did I should cut up my big picture and sell the pieces. I let him into the main studio because I liked a vein that was throbbing on the side of his temple. It wasn't a big vein, actually about the size of a fingernail, but it jumped up and down like a snail strangling. Someday I'll tell you more about Sinkowiz. That he's a prick, in the aforementioned sense, you know, but did you know that he wears white hair silvered and has a camel's hair coat which he's thrown up on three times already? His face is the color of shiny pigskin, and that always fascinates me. I'm a sucker for Sinkowiz's face, I must admit. It's like new money rubbed into old leather. There's a sheen about it, soft, as if he spent his entire life crying in expensive sand. So I let him in and sat him

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on a kitchen chair over which hung an electric light bulb, swaying on the end of a frayed line. Sinkowiz's head danced on the floor like a sea horse in a storm as the bulb swung first one way and then the other. When the bulb was at one end of its arc I could see that vein, throbbing like salmon sperm, dark blue, the color of the Baltic. At the other end of the arc the vein was hidden in the shadow of his head, beating, but beating unseen. I wanted to reach over and touch his vein. All I could think of was electricity and telephone lines. Sinkowiz blubbered on about how he had to have that picture to sell, that he was committed to sell it, that he needed the money, that it was too big to sell in its present size. It now covers all four walls and the end is not in sight. It's heading for the roof, my canvas, my resurrected linen, unfolding its scroll like equator up to the heavens. But with his vein and my unfinished canvas and Sinkowiz's blubbering, I had to set up a new canvas. I worked fast, sketching him in charcoal. Titanium blue, zinc red, and some old yellow that has been drying up in a forgotten tube. I started with a brush but couldn't get the paint on fast enough to match the frenzy of that throbbing so I moved on to a spatula and then fingers, trying to keep up with the mad army of blood that raced through that temple. Let me tell you what I put in. First of all electricity running through frayed lines, sputtering, and then shadows crossing soft faces, old olives, the sun in Sicily, expensive conversations, and of course Sinkowiz's face in triplicate, pleading, smiling, crying, being soothed by costly salves and rubbed with blushing liquids from near-nude virgins. Hair like hoarfrost, looked at in mirrors, often combed. If you look closely at Sinkowiz's face you'll find it's hideously smoothed by small scars, brushed shining like tight leather over upholstery. And the vein, beating its own metronome, reckoning the cost of cocktails and canvas, calligraphy and Corot.

I finished at five a.m., and Sinkowiz was asleep, so I wrapped his lank, slack body in the dirty camel's hair coat and carried him over to my couch. I pulled the coat around his shoulders with the feeling I was wrapping a piece of fish.

No more room in the studio.

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I'm painting on the roof. Set up curtain stretchers weighted down with bricks. Stark flies up now and then to see how I'm coming. I show him the new fallers. The mayor and the city council, five rabbis making liberal pronouncements, a dozen candy store owners, innumerable mothers with babes in arms, two thousand Gideon Bibles placed here for your convenience and enlightenment, and seven irreproachable Miss America contestants.

Word has gotten out about my picture, and everybody wants to fall in it. Stark sells tickets and Jenny seats them in a chair, or tells them to stand. There is no longer room on the roof, so I let the painting drape down the side of the building. Last night it rained, altering the composition of one section. Stark is against touching it up. He feels that whatever happens *is*, and should be left. I can see now that this painting will have no end. I hate to disappoint Sinkowiz and the mortgage on his Long Island home.

An accident.

Better explain about it from the ending. We had a fire. Golub keeps insisting that I had a fire, but he says that for the benefit of the insurance agent who stands perpetually at his elbow. The insurance agent says he can't understand how the fire got started, but it's perfectly simple. Stark did it. Of course he really didn't do it, but since we're going backwards to explain (which is really the only way to explain), he did it. How did he start it the agent asks. With the ash from his cigar I say. The agent tells me that birds don't smoke but I try to explain to him that Stark is no bird. Temporarily, a phase. Behind all those feathers stands Stark, the real commercial menace. Now why is Stark smoking a cigar? Easy. He is upset. And where did he get the cigar? Another easy one. Steinmetz and his mother, Steinmetz's mother, went in halvsies on a box of slim Panatellas, Stark's favorites. Stark goes for your riverboat-gambler cigar, and likes to fiddle with a gold watchchain when he smokes. For the benefit of the insurance agent, I explained why Stark was upset. This was because of the argument I was having with Golub. Now why was I having an argument with Golub? Simple. Because I was having an ar-

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gument with Sinkowiz. Golub and I were arguing over what Sinkowiz had said. I told Golub he couldn't hear because he keeps his driving gloves in his ears. He doesn't have pockets on his pants. So the only place he can keep his gloves are in his ears. They hang down to his shoulders, easily the world's longest, with deep folds in which he keeps all the things he normally would keep in his pockets. But as a result of this he has trouble hearing. Maybe that's why he fails his driving tests. Try to take something out of his ears and he says his ears get cold. His earmuffs look like knee-length socks. What were Sinkowiz and I arguing about? About Golub's ears. Sinkowiz claims they're normal ears, like everyone else's. He says they don't hang down, but I claim they do. When ears hang, they hang. No one can tell you different. I tell Golub he should face his long ears. Then he could accept disappointment.

Golub wants to set up a driving school in my studio. He has a plan to buy old junks and haul them up here for beginners. Golub loves driving. He figures with his own driving school he'll be able to pass his driving tests. How can you argue with a man who carries gearshift knobs in his ears?

Steinmetz's mother wants to know if this is all real, and she has a point there. Jenny argues yes, but then she always was an incurable romantic. Steinmetz doesn't say much. Did I tell you his eyebrows and hair were completely burned off? Steinmetz's mother thinks the whole idea of people falling is unreal. She suggested I do old ladies with lap dogs, or something classic like Man Brushing his Wig, or Portia Surprised. She's a great one for people being surprised. She says that real people are always being surprised. But this she says, waving a bony peeling hand in front of my people falling picture, this is not real. I tried to tell her that people are always falling. They even fall surprised.

New fallings: five generals in full battle dress, seven postmen delivering dead letters, twenty precocious epileptics.

Golub is upset.

I tried to hit him over the head with a lead pipe. He also claims I tried to tie his ears in knots. He is currently pushing a Stude-

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baker into my studio. It's wedged rather tightly in the elevator door.

At eight a.m. Golub is out in the rear of the elevator, feet wedged against the elevator wall, polished little landlord hands on the rear bumper of the Studebaker trying to push it into the studio. And me? I stand on the floor trying to push it back into the elevator. Golub gives a grunt, pushes, and a small drop of businessman's sweat drops from his oily brow. At ten we break for coffee, at twelve for lunch, and by special agreement we knock off at four. He is persistent, this Golub, and shows amazing strength for a landlord. The Studebaker is three inches in his favor. I calculated this amount to a bumper so I cut it off with my acetylene torch and threw it in the back yard. Golub claims he'll sue. He comes back with a lawyer, who helps him push.

Sinkowiz came over and helped me push, but he's like a lawyer, no back or shoulder muscles to speak of. Again he's crying for the big picture.

Fat men keep coming into the ground floor, but never leaving. I can see them now, wedged bulging hip to portly shoulder, Golub's Dachau. If the pain wasn't so bad I'd go downstairs and let them out. Golub's probably hoarding them, for the time when there'll be a shortage of fat men.

When fat men fall, they flutter. I've shown that. Sizzling little pork butterflies.

Steinmetz finally gave me the idea!

He sucks his teeth, but he sucks a new set each day. He has seven sets of false teeth. A Monday set, a Tuesday set, and so on. That means he returns to his sucked teeth. I call them Steinmetz's Revolving Sucked False Teeth.

The same thing with my picture. Mount it on a gigantic revolving drum, spectators at the apex. My Revolving Falling People.

And I'll soon start on the drum too, when the fire in the elevator shaft dies down and the claws on my hand turn back into fingers.

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Peter Schjeldahl

Alcohol

1.

This ought to be in Russian
Cyrillic and emotional!
Like "The Poems of Yuri Zhivago"
Almost (I confess) incomprehensible
In translation—or perhaps
I lack a certain indispensable
Simplicity?

It must be symptomatic of my malaise
That right away I see fit to
Mention an anxiety, as though chagrined
At not really feeling one...

O Optimism, American Jupiter, I
Have sinned against you
Incessantly!

I don't suppose (here I go again!) that in
This life, in this world, these times,
It is really possible
To be free of false feelings
Or not to feel indebted to them
For their miracles of Politics
And the Movies

Is that clear?
All I mean is that being
Here, in the mess of my own and
Everybody else's contradictions,
Is almost unbearable!

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2.

One must maintain one's "natural reticence"
To avoid feeling terrible later

But then one always does feel terrible later
Even after doing something terribly
Noble one never knows it until years afterwards!
And by then, well, "I am not that person"

One is in fact continuously ceasing to be "that person"
In favor of something anterior
That might be, but never is finally,
Primordial and real

Look at Young America, these bereft
Generations, you can't say they haven't "lost something"
Something their parents failed to make use of, perhaps,
Which one day people will try to deny existed

All it's going to take is one cataclysm, one really big war
Or Revolution, to show just who is deserving—
Nobody, that's who And I don't except myself
I go before only the general revulsion

Unless there is none, in which case I'm outsmarted
And there is, after all, some hope for the future

3.

I suspect my father of having overcome
A native slovenliness partly
By leaving it to me
And letting me carry the shame for the both of us
But who am I to indict, finally?
We are the life-spans of our finicks
And panky manias; no one has asked us
To like them, but we really must forgive them

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Occasionally, or else go down to our several
Nervous breakdowns, which await us
Hungrily

However, nobody asked me to write this, either
I do so mainly because it is fine
Now and then to feel
That one has a vocation

And fine, too, to give one's dissatisfaction
A little leverage, if one is ever
To fight one's way up toward clarity
Through this stew of the modern personality
Everything perfectly human and fetid

My head is in a state of embarrassment
But I am here

And I think I am steadily zeroing in
On my "audience," just as steadily hoping
It turns out to be *someone*
And not another abstraction!
And that you can survive without me

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Allan Kaplan

July Poem

The sun beats down as if it were in a frenzy over broken promises. The heat of the concrete and walls seems as if it would begin to howl like Sioux with rifles sold by the bad white men. You drop into your chair like a good man who is deciding what to do next. The Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific drift by your mind's eye. O, daydreams!

Presently, a plain-looking robin attracts you with its twittering on the fire escape. These robins, you note, are no more unusual than working girls. But how peculiar and lovely—your heart, nevertheless, is banging wildly. You sing, you get up, as if your passion wasn't totally hopeless:

> O do not, dear, warble by windows any more.
> Your song shall the concert halls ring-O
> if you tonight my world-weary finger cure,
> if you let it lie under your soft wing-O.

You fall onto the couch, the bird flys away as if to a cloud. You try to prop up on your elbows, but flump! like a fighter who can not rise, you collapse. You lie there as if to get up would mean that the blond sweetheart would be shot by dark gamblers. "So once," you say, "I was a sweet-faced, gangly prodigy carrying a violin to class. So now here is the end of all integrity and of the road to my championship fight." And your eyes begin to close like curtains.

"Yet," you add, "how sweet it is to be knocked out cold...."

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Dick Gallup

Relaxation

So gay on your lovely head
The hat cradles the specialty
Of the house brand-new
And hedged with the flowers
Of the past we have somehow
Got through. If night
Should fold in on us
Here in the day dripping
Down the fire-escapes toward
The ground like poetry
In search of the common man
In all things, smoky and
Vapid insight coming near
To what I can't keep my eyes
Off, the fragile jaws
Of antique life, a fretful
Crowd of messages delivered
Long ago in the pouring rain

Then night would find us
As we are, bright lives
Dancing in the somber light
Of history, shiny pencils
At the edge of things.

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Hannah Weiner

It Walks

It walks.
That is,
it puts one foot in front of another
and moves in the direction of its face,
which is in the front of it,
and in the direction its eyes are looking,
if its eyes are in its face.

While it walks
it can look at scenery,
or think, if it thinks,
or just move closer to an ant
or a new job
or a piece of log to sit on
in between the walking.

Then it sits:
it lowers its ass, which is the hind part,
onto the log,
if it has an ass.
Because if it doesn't
it lies.

That is,
its entire body rests upon the log
and all its legs fold under
or spread out
or go in the air
depending on how its legs are attached,
and where.

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And arms,
if it has arms,
which are legs
that are not needed to walk on.

If it has arms
and legs
and an ass
it can ride a bicycle!

Then the scenery goes by much faster
if it is looking at scenery,
and it gets where it is going faster
if it is going somewhere.

Faster:
it can do it more often
between sunrise and sunset
or between sunset and sunrise
if it does it at night.
That is,
if it can do what it is doing
on a bicycle.

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by these translated
and made an ecstasy.
Thus in our transient and translunar love
translate the love to you and me.
Now that is gone,
and love undone.

He

I invoke, then, a particular day. The clock strikes one.
Now the ~~first~~ snowflake floats upon the stone
and perishes ~~like time~~. Our eyes are filled
with immortal light, clear recognition, clear knowledge
of all that's past and to come:
yes, those histories and prophecies you speak of, the secret
tangents of sense thrust against sense
but only to illumine: the I and You
opposed in a compelled counterpoint
which willy nilly joins them. Of all this
what shall we remember? Simply, the first snowflake falling:
while, from the distance of a breath, for the first time,
I observe the ~~pale and delicate~~ shape of a closed eyelid
closed on the vulnerable secret of ~~the flower~~
(yourself the ~~flower~~) _____ Scent
and yet inviolable as death.

She

Yes. Remember that:
And I too will remember ~~something~~.
When my eyes opened, your hand was holding the umbrella
and the green transparent shadow changed your face.
These shall be time and place.

He

And now, since there's no help, without a kiss we'll part.

She

Each with a separate but remembering heart.

Early draft of the concluding lines of "Love's Grammarians."

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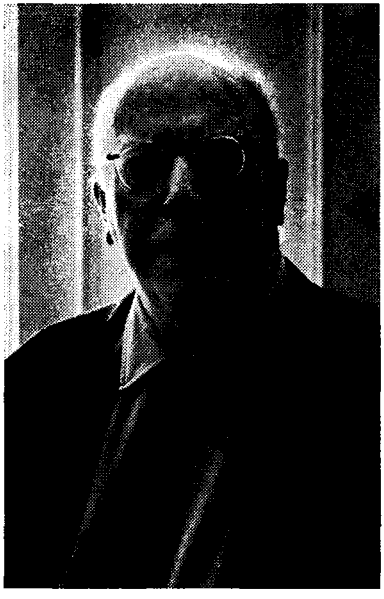
The Art of Poetry IX

Conrad Aiken



An Interview

The interview took place in two sessions of about an hour each in September, 1963, at Mr. Aiken's house at Brewster, Massachusetts. The house, called Forty-one Doors, dates largely from the eighteenth century; a typical old Cape Cod farmhouse, the rooms are small but many, opening in all directions off what must originally have been the most important room, the kitchen. The house is far enough from the center of town to be reasonably quiet even at the height of the summer, and it is close enough to the North Cape shore for easy trips to watch the gulls along the edges of relatively unspoiled inlets.

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Mr. Aiken dresses typically in a tweed sports coat, a wool or denim shirt, and a heavy wool tie. A fringe of sparse white hair gives him a curiously friarly appearance, belied by his irreverence and love of bawdy puns.

He answered the questions about his own work seriously and carefully, but did not appear to enjoy them; not that he seemed to find them too pressing or impertinent, but rather as if answering them was simply hard work. He enjoyed far more telling anecdotes about himself and his friends and chuckled frequently in recalling these stories.

By the end of each hour Mr. Aiken, who had been seriously ill the previous winter, was visibly tired; but once the tape recorder was stilled and the martinis mixed and poured into silver cups—old sculling or tennis trophies retrieved from some pawn or antique shop—he quickly revived. He was glad to be interviewed, but more glad still when it was over.

Later, shortly before the interview went to press, a dozen or so follow-up questions were sent to him at the Cape; the answers to these are spliced into the original interview. "You may find you will need to do a bit of dove-tailing here and there," he wrote; "the old mens *isn't quite, may never be, as* sana *as before, if indeed it ever was." But there was no real problem; his mind and memory remain clear and precise, despite the physical frailties which age has brought.*

INTERVIEWER

In *Ushant* you say that you decided to be a poet when you were very young—about six years old, I think.

AIKEN

Later than that, I think it was around nine.

INTERVIEWER

I was wondering how this resolve to be a poet grew and strengthened?

AIKEN

Well, I think *Ushant* describes it pretty well, with that epigraph from *Tom Brown's School Days:* "I'm the poet of

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White Horse Vale, Sir, with Liberal notions under my cap." For some reason those lines stuck in my head and I've never forgotten them. This image became something I *had* to be.

INTERVIEWER

While you were at Harvard, were you constantly aware that you were going to be a poet; training yourself in most everything you studied and did?

AIKEN

Yes. I compelled myself all through to write an exercise in verse, in a different form, every day of the year. I turned out my page everyday, of some sort—I mean I didn't give a damn about the meaning, I just wanted to master the form—all the way from free verse, Walt Whitman, to the most elaborate of villanelles and ballad forms. Very good training. I've always told everybody who has ever come to me that I thought that was the first thing to do. And to study all the vowel effects and all the consonant effects and the variation in vowel sounds. For example, I gave Malcolm Lowry an exercise to do at Cuernavaca, of writing ten lines of blank verse with the caesura changing one step in each line. Going forward, you see, and then reversing on itself.

INTERVIEWER

How did Lowry take to these exercises?

AIKEN

Superbly. I still have a group of them sent to me at his rented house in Cuernavaca, sent to me by hand from the bar with a request for money, and in the form of a letter—and unfortunately not used in his collected letters; very fine, and very funny. As an example of his attention to vowel sounds, one line still haunts me, "Airplane or aeroplane, or just plain plane." Couldn't be better.

INTERVIEWER

What early readings were important to you? I gather that Poe was.

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AIKEN

Oh, Poe, yes. I was reading Poe when I was in Savannah, when I was ten, and scaring myself to death. Scaring my brothers and sisters to death, too. So I was already soaked in him, especially the stories.

INTERVIEWER

I see you listed occasionally as a Southern writer. Does this make any sense to you?

AIKEN

Not at all. I'm not in the least Southern; I'm entirely New England. Of course, the Savannah *ambiente* made a profound impression on me. It was a beautiful city and so wholly different from New England that going from South to North every year, as we did in the summers, provided an extraordinary counterpoint of experience, of sensuous adventure. The change was so violent, from Savannah to New Bedford or Savannah to Cambridge, that it was extraordinarily useful. But no, I never was connected with any of the Southern writers.

INTERVIEWER

In what way was the change from Savannah to New England "useful" to you?

AIKEN

Shock treatment, I suppose: the milieu so wholly different, and the social customs, and the mere *transplantation;* as well as having to change one's accent twice a year—all this quite apart from the astonishing change of landscape. From swamps and Spanish moss to New England *rocks*.

INTERVIEWER

What else at Harvard was important to your development as a poet, besides the daily practice you described?

AIKEN

I'm afraid I wasn't much of a student, but my casual reading was enormous. I did have some admirable courses,

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especially two years of English 5 with Dean Briggs, who was a great teacher, I think, and that was the best composition course I ever had anywhere.

INTERVIEWER

How did Briggs go about teaching writing?

AIKEN

He simply let us write, more or less, what we wanted to. Then discussion (after his reading aloud of a chosen specimen) and his own marvelous comments: he had genius, and emanated it. Then, at the end of class, we had ten minutes in which to write a short critique of the piece that had been read. This was so helpful to *me* that I took the course for two years.

INTERVIEWER

Was Copeland still teaching then? What did you think of him?

AIKEN

Brilliant reader, not a profound teacher. Vain. At the end of the year he asked me, "Aiken, do you think this course has benefited you?" I was taken aback and replied, "Well, it has made me write often." He replied, "Aiken, you're a very *dry* young man."

INTERVIEWER

Eliot mentioned in an interview with *The Paris Review* that while he was reading French poetry at Harvard, you were reading Italian and Spanish poets.

AIKEN

Yes, I had begun to read Spanish poetry, come to think of it, and Italian, that's true. I'd begun reading Leopardi in 1911, and the French poets I didn't get around to until senior year at Harvard when I discovered Symond's *Symbolist Poets* and swallowed that in one gulp.

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INTERVIEWER

None of these foreign readings had anything like the same effect on your work that Eliot's reading of the French symbolists had on his, did they?

AIKEN

I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER

You kept rather to the English Romantic tradition—

AIKEN

Yes, and Whitman had a profound influence on me. That was during my sophomore year when I came down with a bad attack of Whitmanitis. But he did me a lot of good, and I think the influence is discoverable.

INTERVIEWER

What was the good he did? Mainly enabling you to get away from Victorian forms?

AIKEN

General loosening up, yes. He was useful to me in the perfection of form, as a sort of compromise between the strict and the free.

INTERVIEWER

Was William James still at Harvard when you were there?

AIKEN

No, he retired the year I got there, or the year before, but was still around and you felt his presence very much. But Santayana was the real excitement for me at Harvard, especially "Three Philosophical Poets," which he was inventing that year as he went along—so we were getting the thing right off the fire.

INTERVIEWER

Santayana's insistence that philosophical content—the

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"vision" of philosophy—is one of the things that can give the greatest effect to poetry—this, I gather, impressed you quite highly at the time?

AIKEN

Oh, much. Tremendously. It really fixed my view of what poetry should ultimately be.

INTERVIEWER

That it was greatest if it thought most deeply?

AIKEN

That it really had to begin by *understanding*, or trying to understand.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know Eliot quite well at Harvard?

AIKEN

Eliot and I must have met at the end of my freshman year, when I was elected to the *Harvard Advocate*. We saw a great deal of each other, in spite of the fact that we were a year apart, and remained very close.

INTERVIEWER

Was your conversation largely about poetry or did you share other interests and activities?

AIKEN

Of course, at the beginning, on the *Advocate*, we talked chiefly about poetry, or literature in general. But as the friendship, or kinship developed—for in a way I became his younger brother—it widened to take in everything. And we met on very, very many quite frivolous occasions. Sports, comics, everything. We developed a shorthand language of our own which we fell into for the rest of our lives whenever we met, no holds barred—all a matter of past reference, a common language, but basically *affection*, along with humor, and

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appreciation of each other's minds, and of Krazy Cat. Faced with England, and the New World, and Fraud and all, we always managed to *relax*, and go back to the kidding, and bad punning, and drinking, to the end. It really was marvelous.

INTERVIEWER

Did you see Eliot much after the war brought you back to the States?

AIKEN

Only when he paid his infrequent visits here, when we invariably met to get drunk together. There was a splendid occasion when he and I and our wives dined at "The Greeks'" after he'd received a silver bowl from the Signet Society; he was wearing a cowboy hat, and we all got plastered. We went on to the Red Lion Grill, after many drinks at the Silver Dollar Bar, the two toughest and *queerest* joints in Boston. He couldn't walk, for his ankles were crossed, so Valerie *lifted* him into the taxi.

INTERVIEWER

Did Eliot's early work—such as "Prufrock"—help you in developing your own style?

AIKEN

Oh, "Prufrock" had a tremendous influence on me. You can see it all through the verse symphonies.

INTERVIEWER

The use of the interior monologue in particular?

AIKEN

I don't know whether that came from him. In fact, the whole complex of our relationship is a very subtle thing. I think there was a lot of interchange. For example, I did for English 5 in my extra year at Harvard—the fall of 1911—a poem called "The Clerk's Journal" which was about the life of a little stool-sitting clerk in a bank and his mundane affairs, his

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little love affair, his worry about clothes...and telephone wires in the moonlight. This was three years before "Prufrock."

INTERVIEWER

Do you still have this poem?

AIKEN

Yes, I've still got it, with Briggs' comment on the back of it. This was an anticipation. In other words, I was thinking in this direction before "Prufrock," and I have no doubt that Tom saw this poem, "The Clerk's Journal." The juices went both ways.

INTERVIEWER

There's a lot of what we now think of as "*The Waste Land* attitude" in your verse symphonies, isn't there? In *Forslin* and *The House of Dust*, which came well before *The Waste Land*?

AIKEN

Yes, there's a lot in *The Waste Land* that owes something, I think, to *The House of Dust* and *Forslin*.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever see *The Waste Land* in manuscript?

AIKEN

No, I never did. Not as a whole. But I had seen whole sections which prior to *The Waste Land* existed as separate small poems, I believe not then intended for any other purpose, which were later conglomerated into *The Waste Land*.

INTERVIEWER

How did Pound come across "Prufrock"? Did you take it to him or did Eliot do that after he came to England himself?

AIKEN

In 1914 I persuaded Tom to let me take "Prufrock" to England; he wasn't at all sure of it. I tried it everywhere—not even

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Harold Monro of the famous Poetry Bookshop could see it, thought it crazy; many years later he said it was the Kubla Khan of the Twentieth Century. Then I met Pound, showed it to him, and he was at once bowled over. He sent it to *Poetry*. So, when Tom had to retreat from Germany, when the war started, one of his first moves was to go and see Ezra.

Of course, Tom insisted all his life that I had made him cut a whole page or more out of "Prufrock." I don't remember this, but he claimed it was so—that there was a page or something like that that I thought didn't belong, so he took it out. It may be true, or he may have been confusing it with the major operation that Ezra performed on *The Waste Land*. I'm sorry about it, if so, because there's thirty lines lost!

INTERVIEWER

You knew Maxwell Bodenheim, didn't you? *(A new paperback copy of Bodenheim's* My Life and Loves in Greenwich Village *was on the coffee table.)*

AIKEN

Oh, very well. He was a great friend of mine. He used to catch me now and then, touring the country. I don't know how he managed it, but periodically he'd show up in Boston on his way to or from Chicago or New York. He was quite a fascinating creature. He really was a *dedicated* bum and poet.

INTERVIEWER

Did he have an effect on other poets that we've lost sight of?

AIKEN

Yes, I think so. He was a fascinating talker, in spite of the stammer, and he knew everybody. He was a great friend of Bill Williams. You must have heard the story of his broken arm? He called up Williams at Rutherford and said, "I've broken my arm. Can I come and stay with you till it heals?" Bill said, "Certainly." About a month or two went by and Max did nothing about having the cast examined or changed, so finally Bill insisted on looking at it and discovered that there had never been any broken arm.

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INTERVIEWER

Did you see a good bit of Pound in the early days?

AIKEN

I saw a lot of him for about six weeks in 1914 in London. I had a letter of introduction to him from Herman Hagedorn, who, it turned out, really didn't know Pound at all. But Pound was extraordinarily kind to me and really took pains to take me around and introduce me to people and to publishers, not always with luck.

INTERVIEWER

Was he any help to you in your own work?

AIKEN

Not a bit. We agreed to disagree about that right off, and I felt right off, too, that he was not for me, that he would become the old man of the sea and be on my shoulders in no time—which is exactly the experience that Williams had with him. I remember Williams describing how when he walked with Pound in London, Pound was always one step ahead. This gradually annoyed Williams to death, so he made a point of being right beside Pound. Very typical that—tells a lot, I think.

INTERVIEWER

How about John Gould Fletcher? You worked with him, were very close to him, in Boston and Cambridge, weren't you?

AIKEN

Yes, just after the war began, about 1915, he came back to Boston and we lived next door to each other for three years. I saw a great deal of him and we swapped notes and what-not; and agreed to disagree about many things because he was more involved in imagism or "Amy"gism than I proposed to be. But I think he had great talent which didn't quite come off somehow.

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INTERVIEWER

He's practically unread now.

AIKEN

I know. He wrote me a tragic letter in 1949, I think it was, saying, "You know, Aiken, we are forgotten. We might as well face it." This was only a year or two before he jumped into the lake.

INTERVIEWER

Did Fletcher's organization of material, the sort of thing he was experimenting with in the color symphonies, bear any relation to the work you were doing with music in your verse symphonies?

AIKEN

I don't know. I don't think we influenced each other, but we were interested in the same sort of thing, in a very different way, of course. He was going for this abstract color business and, I think, with more French influence behind him than I had.

INTERVIEWER

When did you first meet Malcolm Lowry?

AIKEN

In 1929. He came to Cambridge to work with me one summer on *Ultramarine*.

INTERVIEWER

How old was he then?

AIKEN

Barely nineteen, I think. He went back to matriculate at Cambridge that autumn.

INTERVIEWER

Later you moved back to England yourself?

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AIKEN

Yes, the next year. Then it was that his father turned him over to me *in loco parentis.*

INTERVIEWER

To keep him out of trouble or to teach him poetry?

AIKEN

To take care of him and to work with him. So he spent all his holidays with us in Rye, or went with us if we went abroad. During his years at Cambridge, he was with me constantly.

INTERVIEWER

What was he working on at this time?

AIKEN

He was finishing *Ultramarine.* I've still got about a third of one version of *Ultramarine.* An interesting specimen of his deliberate attempt to absorb me came to light because there was a page recounting the dream of eating the father's skeleton which comes into my own novel, *Great Circle.* He was going to put this in his book and it didn't seem to matter at all that *I'd* had the dream and written it out.

INTERVIEWER

He doesn't put that in the final version?

AIKEN

No. I said, "No, Malcolm, this is carrying it *too* far."

INTERVIEWER

What about *Under the Volcano?* Did you work with him on that also?

AIKEN

No. The first version was already finished when I arrived in Mexico in 1937. He'd been there two or three years. The extraordinary thing is that it was not published for another

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ten years, during which time he was constantly revising and rewriting. He changed the end, I think entirely, from the version I saw. But the book was already finished and so was another novel called *In Ballast to the White Sea*, which was lost. I think it was in his shack that burnt down at Dollarton, Vancouver.

That was a remarkable thing too, although very derivative. You could swim from one influence to another as you went from chapter to chapter. Kafka and Dostoevsky and God knows what all. But it was a brilliant thing, had some wonderful stuff in it including, I remember, a description of a drunken steamboat ride up the Manchester Canal from Liverpool to Manchester.

INTERVIEWER

He lived through a lot that he was able to use very effectively.

AIKEN

Oh, he didn't miss a trick. He was a born observer.

INTERVIEWER

Was Lowry a disciplined writer? His life seems to have been so undisciplined.

AIKEN

Yes, when it came to writing, Malcolm was as obsessed with style as any Flaubert, and read enormously to *feed* himself. As I mentioned, he wrote and rewrote *Volcano* for ten years. He once chided me for not taking more pains to "decorate the page."

INTERVIEWER

Do you think writers—fiction writers particularly—should try deliberately to get out and live through the sort of thing he did? Search for experience? I doubt if he did it quite so consciously, but he lived a very active and varied life.

AIKEN

No, I don't think that was the intention, or not wholly the

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intention in his case. He really had a yen for the sea. And he came by it naturally; I think his mother's father had something to do with the sea. Of course, that's how we met, through his reading *Blue Voyage*. And he always assumed that in some mystic way the fact I had dedicated *Blue Voyage* to C.M.L. was a dedication to him. Those are his initials. Actually these were the initials of my second wife. But he always thought this was the finger pointing.

The very first night he arrived in Hampton Hall, on Plympton Street where I was living, next door to the Crimson Building, he and I and my youngest brother Robert had a sort of impromptu wrestling match. In the course of this I suggested we use the lid of the W.C. tank and each take hold of one end of it and wrestle for possession of this thing. So I got it all right; I got it away from Malcolm but fell right over backward into the fireplace and went out like a light; and when I came to, all I could see was red. I was stripped to the waist and lying in bed by myself. They'd disappeared, of course—we'd been imbibing a little bit—and I galloped down the hall to the elevator not knowing what to do. I thought I'd better get a doctor because blood was pouring down my face. It turned out I had a fracture of the skull, and I was in bed for the next two or three weeks. Malcolm would sometimes remember to bring me a bottle of milk, and sometimes not. And during all this we were working on *Ultramarine*. That was the day's work, always.

INTERVIEWER

To turn to your own work—and the prototypical *Paris Review* question: How do you write? You've told me before that you compose on the typewriter.

AIKEN

Yes, ever since the early twenties. I began by doing book reviews on the typewriter and then went over to short stories on the machine, meanwhile sticking to pencil for poetry.

INTERVIEWER

So your verse symphonies were all written in long hand?

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AIKEN

They were all written in little exercise books, with pencil.

INTERVIEWER

When did you start writing poetry on the typewriter?

AIKEN

About the middle of the twenties, I think. It was largely in the interests of legibility, because my handwriting was extremely small and not very distinct, and the pencil *faded*. And so this was a great advantage and saved me the pains of copying, because in many instances the short stories in *Bring! Bring!* were sent out exactly as written. They were composed straight off my head. I didn't change anything. It's a great labor-saving device—with some risks, because if you lost a copy in the mails it was gone!

INTERVIEWER

You didn't make carbons?

AIKEN

I never used a carbon because that made me self-conscious. I can remember discussing the effect of the typewriter on our work with Tom Eliot, because he was moving to the typewriter about the same time I was. And I remember our agreeing that it made for a slight change of style in the prose—that you tended to use more periodic sentences, a little shorter, and a rather choppier style—and that one must be careful about that. Because, you see, you couldn't look ahead quite far enough, for you were always thinking about putting your fingers on the bloody keys. But that was a passing phase only. We both soon discovered that we were just as free to let the style throw itself into the air as we had been writing manually.

INTERVIEWER

Did writing on the typewriter have any comparable effect on the style of the poetry?

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AIKEN

I think it went along with my tendency to compress the poetry, that began about the mid-twenties, '23 or '24, thereabouts. But revision was always done manually. I preferred yellow paper because it's not so responsible-looking and I would just let fly and then put the thing away after it was written and not look at it until the next day. Then go to work on it with a pencil—chop and change and then copy that off again on the yellow paper—and this would go on for days sometimes. There are some instances, especially in later work, when there have been something like twenty versions of a poem.

INTERVIEWER

In the verse symphonies, you did less revising?

AIKEN

Much less. It came out like a ribbon and lay flat on the brush.

INTERVIEWER

Did you often work on two or three poems at once? Particularly when you were doing the shorter poems, like the ones in the two series of *Preludes?*

AIKEN

No, not so much. I usually stayed with the individual item until it was satisfactory. Although sometimes I would do two or three preludes in a day, first drafts. And then all three would come in for re-tooling, so to speak, the next day or the day after. Those happened very fast, the preludes—especially the *Time in the Rock* ones. They were outpourings as I've only really known during that period. Didn't matter when or where I was. I remember in "Jeake's House" in Rye when carpenters were going through the kitchen and the dining room all the time, which is where I worked at a long refectory table, and I would just go cheerfully on turning out preludes while hammering and sawing and what-not happened about me.

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INTERVIEWER

But most of your other poems have come much more slowly?

AIKEN

Yes, much. Things like *A Letter From Li Po* and "The Crystal" were immensely labored over. Months. Very different procedure entirely. I had the idea but it had to be developed very slowly.

INTERVIEWER

In revising, say, the shorter poems like the *Preludes*, did you usually find it possible to revise so that you were eventually satisfied with the poem, or have you often discarded poems along the way?

AIKEN

Oh, I've discarded a great many. And occasionally I've discarded and then resurrected. I would find a crumpled yellow ball of paper in the wastebasket, in the morning, and open it to see what the hell I'd been up to; and occasionally it was something that needed only a very slight change to be brought off, which I'd missed the day before.

INTERVIEWER

Do you tend now to look on the two series of *Preludes* as your major poetry?

AIKEN

I think those two books are central, along with *Osiris Jones* and *Landscape West of Eden*, but I still don't think the symphonies are to be despised. They've got to be looked at in an entirely different way; and allowances must be made for the diffuseness and the musical structure, which I think I overdid sometimes. Although *Senlin* I think stands up fairly well. And *Festus* too.

INTERVIEWER

You speak of your "verse symphonies." Where did you get the idea of adapting musical structures to poetry?

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AIKEN

For one thing, I always hankered to be a composer—I was mad about music, though I never studied seriously, and can't read a note. But I learned to play the piano, and became pretty skillful at improvisation, especially after a drop or two. And from the beginning I'd thought of the two realms as really one: they were saying the same thing, but in two voices. Why not marry them? A young composer named Bainbridge Crist, whom I met in London in 1913, introduced me to the tone-poems of Strauss, and out of this came an early poem, "Disenchantment," now disavowed (though I still like parts of it). And, then, the symphonies. They had the tone of the time, and they married the unlikely couple of Freud and music.

INTERVIEWER

What about your new poem, *Thee*? Is it related to some of this earlier work?

AIKEN

No, *Thee* is something else again. This is nearer to some of the *Preludes*—not so much aimed at music (*pace* the title *Preludes*) as at meaning. But this poem, like "Blues for Ruby Matrix," for another example, just came like Topsy. It seized me at lunch, the first section, and I had to leave the table to put it down. Then it finished itself. In a way I had little to do with it. The theme is much like that of the *Preludes*, but the style very different: I think I'd learned a trick or two from my children's book, *Cats and Bats and Things with Wings*. Short lines, no adjectives, and, for its purpose, *very* heavy rhyming. None of which was in the least calculated. Who dunnit?

INTERVIEWER

You stress in *Ushant* that about the time you were writing *Landscape West of Eden* and the *Preludes* you were beginning to formulate a view of poetry, or of a poetic comprehension of the world, as the only religion any longer tenable or viable. Should we be seeing this more clearly in the two series of *Preludes* than we have, or than most critics have?

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AIKEN

Yes, it was there all right. Actually Houston Peterson in *The Melody of Chaos* got a little close to it although he had only seen the first ten or twelve of *Memnon*. But he, I think, detected the novelty of this approach to the world, or something.

INTERVIEWER

What about your later poems—are *Li Po* and "The Crystal," for example, related to the work you did in the thirties?

AIKEN

Yes, I think you can see their roots in the *Preludes*. But again, of course, it's a more expanded thing, as the earlier work was more expansive, in a different way. "The Crystal," and the poem about my grandfather, "Halloween," and *Li Po* and "A Walk in the Garden"—I think you can see how that whole group grew out of the *Preludes*.

INTERVIEWER

You mention "Halloween"—this has an emphasis on the American past, as does *The Kid*, which is quite a bit different from the work you did in England. Is *The Kid*—

AIKEN

That's a sort of *sport* in my career, I would say. And the vaudeville poems are another sort of deliberate divagation.

INTERVIEWER

You mean the ones you were doing very early, in the 1910's?

AIKEN

Yes. Those were based on observation; I was an addict of vaudeville, and Boston was marvelous for it. You had about three levels of vulgarity or refinement, whichever way you want to put it. The refinement being Keiths at the top, of course, and the bottom being Waldron's Casino, and in be-

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tween Loews Theatre. And Loews was really the best. It was a wonderful mixture of vulgarity and invention, of high spirits and dirty cracks.

INTERVIEWER

When you started writing fiction—I suppose in the early 20's—what made you turn away from poetry, which you'd been doing up until then? Were you looking for a wider public?

AIKEN

No, it was almost wholly financial. Our income wasn't quite sufficient, and I thought maybe if I could turn out some short stories I could make a little money. But of course that proved to be an illusion, because the sort of stories I wrote could only be sold to things like *The Dial* or *The Criterion*, and I didn't make any more than I would have out of poetry. But then I got involved in it and found that it was fun, in its different way, and that in fact the short story is a kind of poem, or for *my* purposes it was. And so on it went, parri-passu with the poetry.

INTERVIEWER

Some of your stories, like "Mr. Arcularis" and "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," have become classics. Where did you get the ideas for these stories? Dreams? Did reading Freud have anything to do with them?

AIKEN

Of course Freud was in everything I did, from 1912 on. But there was no special influence on these. "Arcularis" *did* come out of a dream, plus a meeting with a man of that name on a ship. "Silent Snow" was a complete invention; or, let's say, a projection of my own inclination to insanity.

INTERVIEWER

Then you started working with the longer fiction—*Blue Voyage* and *Great Circle?*

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AIKEN

Yes, and that was another reason for going into the short stories. Because I actually wrote one chapter of *Blue Voyage* and then stopped dead. I thought no, I really don't know enough about the *structure* of fiction—perhaps I'd better play with the short story for a while, and learn something about this. And also make a little money. So it was after *Bring! Bring!* was finished that I went back to *Blue Voyage*.

Blue Voyage was another matter. I really wanted, sort of in mid-career, to make a statement about the predicament of the would-be artist and just what made him tick and what was wrong with him and why he went fast or slow. Just as *Ushant* was the other end of that statement. "D." of *Ushant* is Demarest of *Blue Voyage*, grown fatter and balder. That was always planned—that I should, as it were, give myself away, to such extent as I could bear it, as to what made the wheels go round. Feeling that this was one of the responsibilities of a writer—that he should take off the mask.

INTERVIEWER

Show just exactly how his own mind and his own experience go into his work—

AIKEN

Yes, and to what extent accidents helped him, and mistakes even, and failures in character, and so forth.

INTERVIEWER

Did you ever meet Freud? Wasn't H.D. trying for a while to get you to go and work with him?

AIKEN

Freud's influence—*and* along with his, that of Rank, Ferenczi, Adler, and (somewhat less) Jung was tremendous. And I wrote one letter to Freud, to which he never replied. I was being groomed by H.D. and Bryher to go to Vienna and take over what H.D. had been doing, i.e., observer: observing: reciprocal analysis. Freud had read *Great Circle*, and I'm told kept a copy on his office table. But I didn't go, though I started to. Misgivings set in, and so did poverty.

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INTERVIEWER

You've spoken a couple of times—in *Ushant* and more guardedly or more subtly in the poetry—of your faith in consciousness. You speak of the "teleology of consciousness" at one point. This sounds almost as if you're looking for a new spiritual attitude toward life, a new religion not based on religious dogma or revelation or a conventional God. Is there anything to this?

AIKEN

Possibly. I don't know whether I'd put it quite like that. Of course I do believe in this evolution of consciousness as the only thing which we can embark on, or in fact, willy-nilly, *are* embarked on; and along with that will go the spiritual discoveries and, I feel, the inexhaustible wonder that one feels, that opens more and more the more you know. It's simply that this increasing knowledge constantly enlarges your kingdom and the capacity for admiring and loving the universe. So in that sense I think what you say is correct. *Ushant* says this.

INTERVIEWER

One statement that's always impressed me is the preface you recreated for *The House of Dust* in 1948, in which you wrote that "implicit in this poem was the theory that was to underlie much of the later work—namely, that in the evolution of man's consciousness, ever widening and deepening and subtilizing his awareness, and in his dedication of himself to this supreme task, man possesses all that he could possibly require in the way of a religious credo: when the half-gods go, the gods arrive; he can, if he only will, become divine." Is that too extreme a statement, do you feel now?

AIKEN

No, I would stand by that. Which is really, in sum, more or less what my Grandfather Potter preached in New Bedford.

INTERVIEWER

When did you first come across your Grandfather Potter's sermons?

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AIKEN

I've been carrying the *corpus* of my grandfather—to change the famous saying—with me all my life. I was given very early two volumes of his sermons; and I never go anywhere without them.

INTERVIEWER

What is it in them that's been so important to you?

AIKEN

Well, the complete liberation from dogma; and a determined acceptance of Darwin and all the rest of the scientific fireworks of the nineteenth century.

INTERVIEWER

This was toward the end of the nineteenth century?

AIKEN

Middle of the century. He actually took his parish out of the Unitarian Church. As he put it, "They have defrocked not only me, but my church." For thirty years he and the church, the New Bedford parish, were in the wilderness. Then the Unitarians, about 1890, caught up with him and embraced him. By this time he was president of the Free Religious Association and was lecturing all over the country on the necessity for a religion without dogma.

And this inheritance has been my guiding light: I regard myself simply as a continuance of my grandfather, and primarily, therefore, as a teacher and preacher, and a distributor, in poetic terms, of the *news* of the world, by which I mean new knowledge. This is gone into at some length in *Ushant*. And elsewhere I have said repeatedly that as poetry is the highest speech of man, it can not only accept and contain, but in the end express best everything in the world, or in himself, that he discovers. It will absorb and transmute, as it always has done, and glorify, all that we can know. This has always been, and always will be, poetry's office.

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INTERVIEWER

You once wrote, speaking of the great writers of the American nineteenth century—Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, James, Poe: "We isolate, we exile our great men, whether by ignoring them or praising them stupidly. And perhaps this isolation we offer them is our greatest gift." It seems to me you didn't receive much attention from the time of your Pulitzer Prize in 1930 until, at best, fairly recently—that you were ignored in the way you speak of for almost thirty years. "This isolation we offer" as "our greatest gift"—would this be true of yourself also?

AIKEN

I think so. I think it's very useful to be insulated from your surrounds, and this gives it to you because it gives you your inviolate privacy, without pressures, so that you can just be yourself. I think that what's happening today, with all the young poets rushing from one college to another, lecturing at the drop of a hat and so on, is not too good; I think it might have a bad effect on a great many of the young poets. They—to quote Mark Twain—"swap juices" a little too much, so that they are in danger of losing their own identity, and don't give themselves time enough in which to work out what's really of importance to them—they're too busy. I think Wordsworth and Coleridge had the right idea too—they deliberately sequestered themselves.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of the state of poetry today? We sometimes think of the period from 1910 to 1940 or so as being the Golden Era of modern American poetry. Do you think there is anything being done now comparable to the work that was done in those years?

AIKEN

No, I don't think there is. I think we've come to a kind of splinter period in poetry. These tiny little bright fragments of observation—and not produced under sufficient pressure—

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some of it's very skillful, but I don't think there's anywhere a discernible major poet in the process of emerging; or if he is, I ain't seen him. But I think there's an enormous lot of talent around, and somewhere amongst these I'm sure that something will emerge, given time.

INTERVIEWER

In an interview for *The Paris Review* Robert Lowell said: "Poets of my generation and particularly younger ones... write a very musical, difficult poem with tremendous skill, perhaps there's never been such skill. Yet the writing seems divorced from culture somehow. It's become too much something specialized that can't handle much experience. It's become a craft, purely a craft, and there must be some breakthrough back into life." He speaks almost as if there's *too* much skill, that it's become something that's holding younger poets back; as if they're concentrating so much on finding the perfect line or the perfect image that they aren't thinking or feeling—

AIKEN

Well, I don't think that's so, and I think possibly there Lowell is really reflecting one of his own defects, because he *is* a little awkward. What really astonished me in that interview with him is his description of his method of writing verse nowadays—writing out a prose statement first and then trying to translate it to metrics without sacrificing the phrases. Well, this is really the damnedest way of writing a poem that I ever heard of, and I don't think it's any wonder that sometimes his things sound so—so prosaic—if I may go so far.

INTERVIEWER

Poets now seem so wrapped up in the short poem and the perfect small statement; this seems to grow out of the early experiments of Pound and Williams, imagism also. Do you think that these tendencies have taken poets' minds away from larger subjects—from really *thinking* about what they're going to write about?

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AIKEN

I think quite likely. That's a little apropos of what I called the "splinter" stage of poetry. And I think this does go back to the imagists and Pound, T.E. Hulme, and H.D., primarily. And of course that, as a lot of us were quick to see at the time, did impose limitations and very serious ones. That's why I suppose you could say that Williams, for all his power, never really came out with a *final* thing. In fact, I think one of his completest statements is in one of his earliest poems, "The Wanderer," which is much better than *Paterson* because in that he has a real continuing line which goes from one section to another, and it isn't so fragmented.

INTERVIEWER

What about Pound's later works? Do you think that in the *Cantos* he's found a way to give a larger organization, make a larger statement, from the earlier techniques?

AIKEN

No, I don't think so. I think that's a majestic failure. There too it's—he described it himself in one of his own lines: "A broken bundle of mirrors." That's exactly what it is—brilliant fragments here and there, and beautiful—but it doesn't work; there isn't sufficient mind behind it, or organizing theme. He's said this himself—but I take that with a grain of salt.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think about the contemporary poets who talk about "mind-expanding" or "consciousness-expanding" —Ginsberg and his group? Do you think drugs can expand a writer's awareness or perceptions?

AIKEN

I've tried it long ago, with hashish and peyote. Fascinating, yes, but no good, no. This, as we find in alcohol, is an *escape* from awareness, a cheat, a momentary substitution, and in the end a destruction of it. With luck, someone might

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have a fragmentary Kubla Khan vision. But with no meaning. And with the steady destruction of the observing and remembering mind.

INTERVIEWER

Do you still waver between the view of the artist as simply supplying vicarious experience and your later view that the artist is the leader in the expansion of man's awareness and consciousness?

AIKEN

I think they can function together. I think they do. It's like two parts of the same machine; they go on simultaneously.

INTERVIEWER

When you speak of the artist as the creator and purveyor of new knowledge, doesn't this, to be effective, demand a fairly wide audience?

AIKEN

To be effective?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, socially effective.

AIKEN

No, not necessarily. I mean that can come serially, with time. A small but brilliant advance made today by someone's awareness may for the moment reach a very small audience, but in so far as it's valid and beautiful, it will make its way and become part of the whole world of consciousness. So in that sense it's all working towards this huge audience, and all working towards a better man.

—ROBERT HUNTER WILBUR

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Ed Sanders

Two Poems

I

The leaves of heaven
are ever greene,
& the leaves of the
soul are Sere
& cold

I have failed
my mother
& she has
failed me

Everything about
a human
is doomed
his life, his
things, his
hope, his
work—

The pallbearer
barfs on the
diaper

The phantoms,
The phantoms,
what to do
about the
phantoms?

kiss a hot
wet lightbulb

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II

The hair
oozes out of
the scalp
like Huncke's
palm hairs.

A lonely wretch
selling scarves
in a bazaar
is lord
of the day,
a kicked dog
schemes like
any sullen
Pentagon

The puke
hangs in
drunken strands
over the gratings,
& the barfer
slouches away
knowing only
his turmoil
& the fact
Jesus Calamine
of the Salve
of the cross
I feel cold
I feel old.

everything passes
as a foot-fetish,
The dripping of the
gripper
& the flailings
of the flippered flailer.

We don't know.
We are not given
even time for the
composition of questions,

o Snuffer.

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The Gladiators
are stomping each other in the mush

& the pale universe above & beyond
their gaze
is it disturbed by rumbles
in its inners?

I don't know
I don't know

πάντα squshes,
everything oozes.

Beauty
I have given
you some
feminine
appellation
as if in some
humble capitulation
to Ferlinghetti.
Beauty
climb into my ass & viscera
& stop hallucinating
at me
as if you were
on a page.

I weep
and know
how to weep
only
The grandfathers
hang like beads
on the chain
of the
Celestial Lady.
How far
& how completely
stupendous
is the vista
of the phylogenous
struggle.

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Lewis MacAdams

The Volume of Water

Imagine, the grace of these children!
We are in the sun. What elapses
is history. Do you ever move?
No? Even if you do,
the sun goes down like an iron.
When it's gone we move to put on clothes.
How rich
        your naked belly
Let's fuck again.
                Now that it's dark
We can linger in the ground.

The sky
undergoes wave after wave of interpreters.
    A skier signals
The boat has appeared
to pick us up. We will be soon
with our brothers
who open the door to the ocean.
                O big Drone,
                you alleviate much,
                the waste, the pain.
This trance
is the most relevant I can conceive
for the spell we've set ourselves
on earth.
It is filled with the juice of the sun.

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Stills
from
Mecamorphosis
by
Erró

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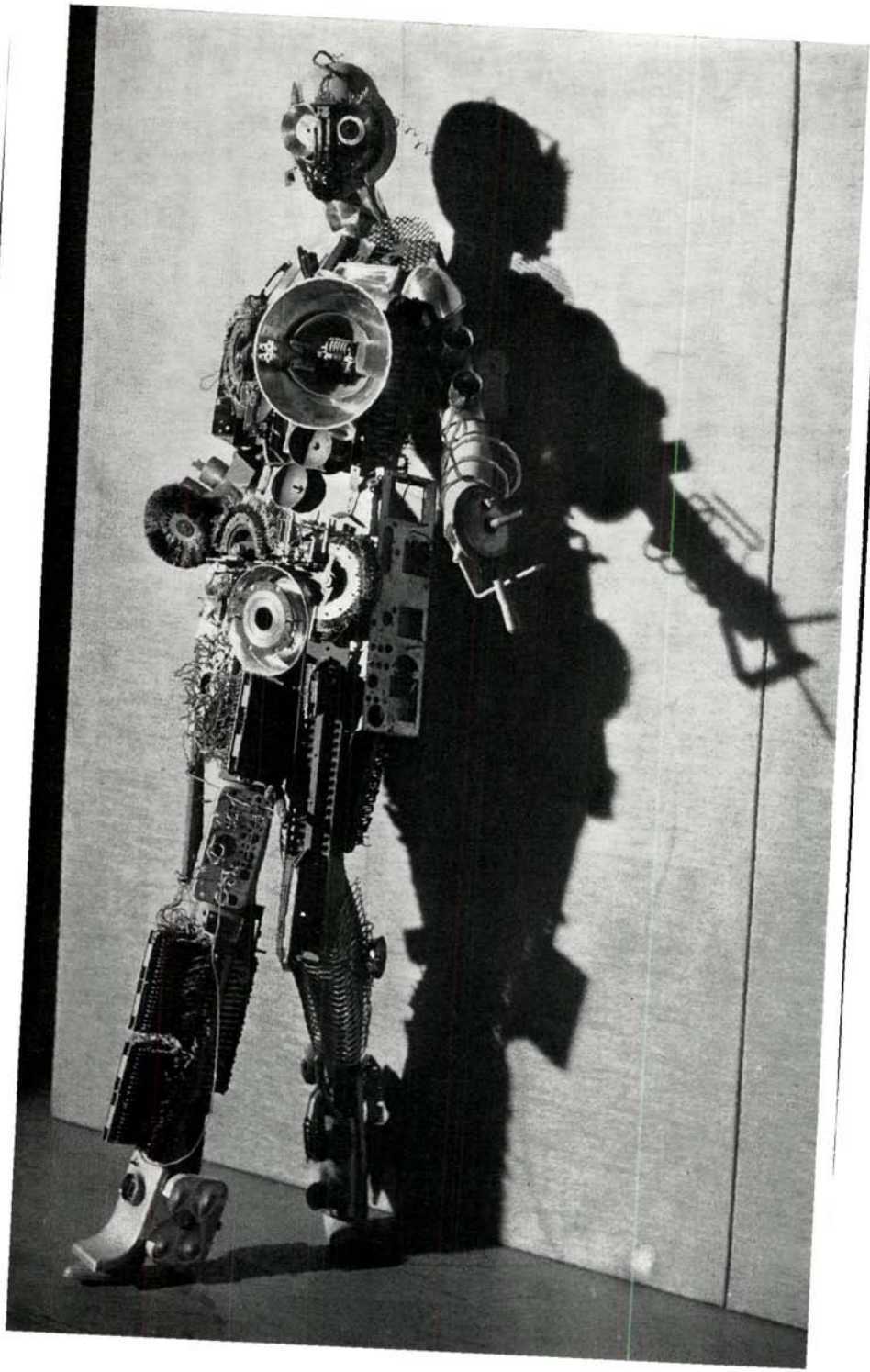

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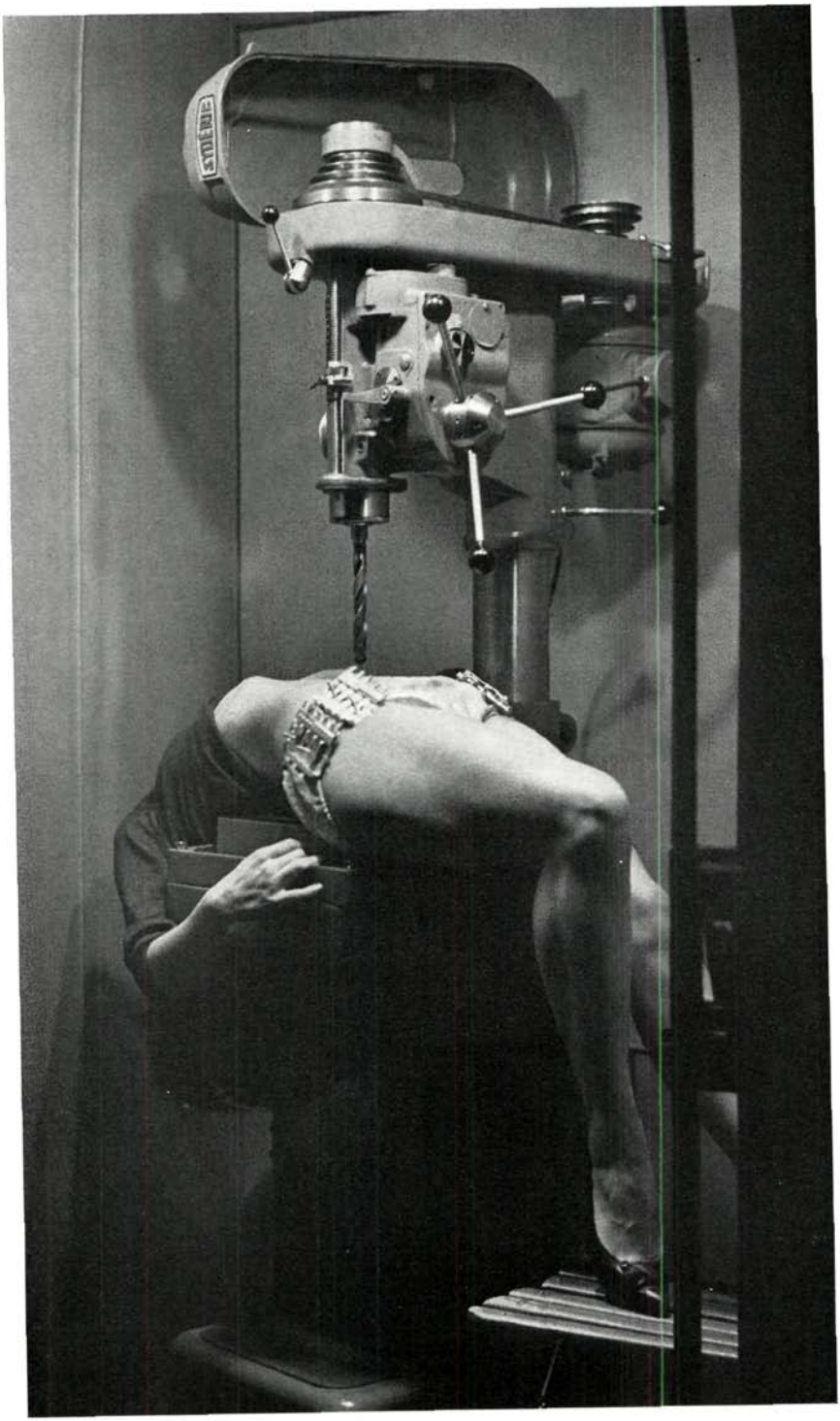

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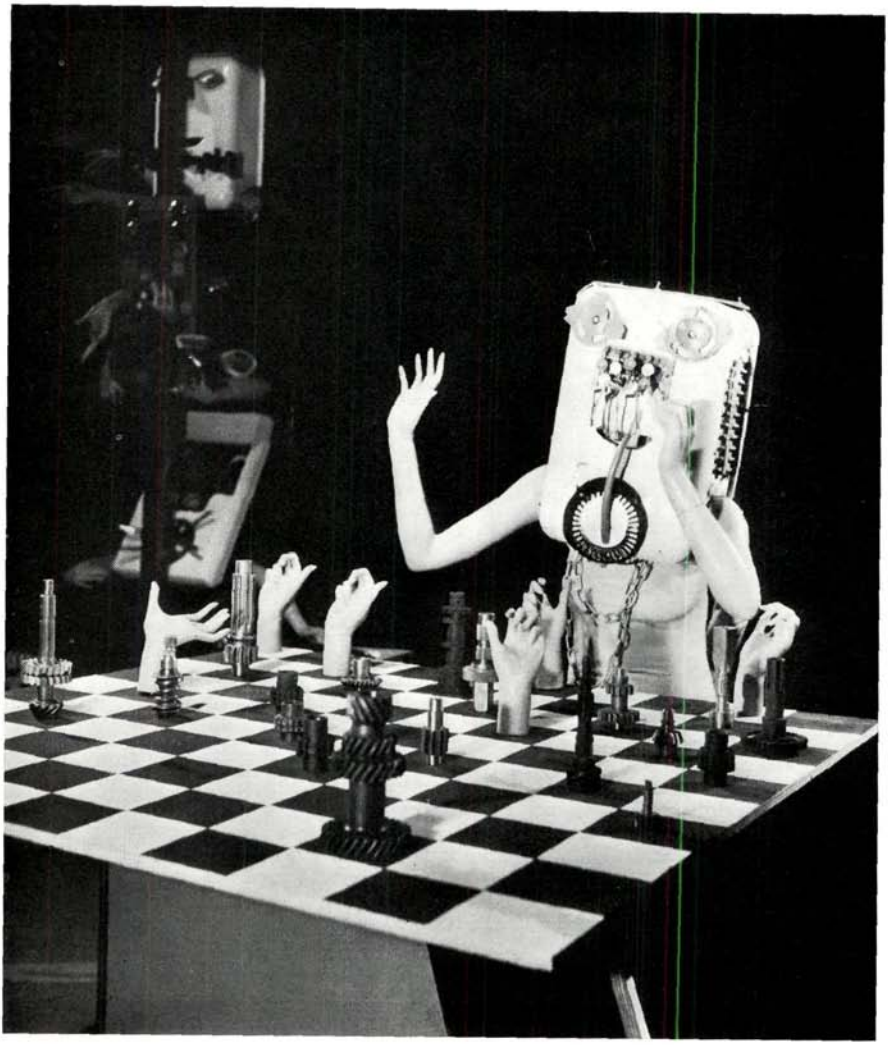

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George Kimball

Softness belongs to life.
Tell me your forbidden thoughts
and we will breathe together.

My mind will be less than enough.
Scented and pale, these brief flashes
of knowledge disappear with their colors.
You are aware of that turning without end,
for you were invoking that memory tonight.

Taking what I find in the clouds, I
will decide the full weight of the absence
by discovery alone. The work of one single
hand has torn its disproportionate share
of false madness, and though your existence
may be following the way of water instead
of my own, it is not my place to decide which.

The way is boundless, if that matters.
It is to look head-on at *anything*, to
discern that shape lent by heaven.With
the full moon of nothingness, the air will
find its way. The absence of tears is a wound.

In this sick and dry waste, in this stillness
and emptiness, it is best to be empty. One
would only lose the place. Let me bring
this realization closer; there is no rest for
the other living. Too much real in the light of day.

New York
12–66

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David Lehman

Traces

And then they are there all of the people depressed
Into tattoos or footprints or names plastered
Or carved into wood or wall
Smashing their way through thickets
Or breaking before the seat of a car
Behind the wave of a smile
Which is the wave of civilization
Or the crazy past they left behind,
Laughing, as if they are tracing the rotting
Roller coaster wood into those landsmen's
Plains, the old plains of America's darkness.

8/8/67

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The Sweet Salento, With Edmond Kulik, and Peter Stern Among the Woptimists

Steve Katz

"You just don't grab a young Italian ass in the middle of the Salento."

"I'm speaking theoretically, Kulik."

"Theoretically my left penis. Look what you did. You could have got yourself massacred in that town."

"So. Nothing happened. I just had the urge for a handful of meat, so what."

"Nothing happened because I talked to them."

"I talked to them, too."

What I had with Stern, I suppose, was a kind of friendship, a blasted mutuality because we were the only Americans in Lecce, thrown together because we had taken a job teaching there at an American language school. I didn't make friends easily, and Stern wasn't my type, a braggart stud New York egoist; but I've learned that friends do that, bear up under the irritation of each other.

We spent our free time moving around like this, on foot or bicycle, stopping by the three seas, entering the little towns sometimes silently, sometimes like shock waves. It kept Lecce from boring us, and it kept us from hating each other.

We set out on the road from San Pietro in Lama to Nardò. Stern was full up. "You're right, Kulik. I make a fool out of myself because I don't keep my mouth shut. Those people all hate me."

"It wasn't your mouth, you idiot. They didn't understand a word you said. You were speaking English. I fixed it up."

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"Goddam it Kulik. Why didn't you tell me I was speaking English? I wanted them to hear what I was saying. You could have told me."

Three girls paused to stare at us from a trough where they were washing clothes. They waved their big red hands.

"What did you say to fix it up?"

"I told them you were in love."

"How did you know that?"

"Know what?"

"That I was in love."

"I never knew that. *Are* you in love?"

"Of course I am. That's why I want to talk to you." I kept walking and waited for him to talk. Stern's life was a pudding. He'd been in Lecce a little over a month and had complicated his relationships in ways I couldn't have in five years. I never touched anything. I just enjoyed the cordial formality of knowing the students, but Stern threw himself into experience like a swimmer. "How, Kulik, can I even think of beginning to live with these people when I can't talk with them without blowing up. How can I think about it?"

"You're thinking of getting..."

"I'm going to marry her."

"When did you decide this?"

"I knew it from the beginning, in a way."

"You haven't been here two months yet. Who is this girl?" I sounded like his father. "Does she know about it?"

"You've seen me with her between classes. As far as knowing, we've never talked about it."

"Stern, you don't know what you're saying. Marriage is tough business with these people. They don't take it lightly as we do. You'd better speak to her." Women, except for the prostitutes, seemed so impossible in Lecce, something to look at and expect to stay away from.

"I will," Stern said. "But I'm afraid of it, that the whole affair will be ruined."

"Come on, Stern, you're not having an affair. This isn't New York City. Stop putting me on."

"Stern is having an affair. Why should he put you on? I'm

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not a horny teenager. You know her. It's not impossible for Stern. She's a rich girl. She fell in love with me first thing. Her maid took us for a walk one day, and the first thing she does is get rid of the maid and open up her blouse for me. 'I want you to see,' she says. So I look. It's tits. I've seen tits before. I put my tongue to her nipples and she begins to smell like an oil-burner. What can I do? I fuck her. Right there, with the maid looking through the bushes for all I know. That's been it, and believe me they're not lying about these Southern Italian women."

"You didn't tell me..." My lips were dry, my palms were dry, blisters were swelling on the soles of my feet.

"I just didn't want to make you feel bad, like showing off my success." Stern shouldered his way into the silence.

We caught a bus from Nardò to Gallipoli, an old tough-springed blue one stuffed with women in black holding children, and young girls with their mothers. We were the feature attraction, being strangers and young men besides. The beautiful young girls looked at us with simple curiosity without averting their glances, their shapely mouths trembling slightly to avoid smiling, their moist eyes tugging you into their depths. The women with children in their arms discussed us loudly in dialect, and watched us. I couldn't keep from looking at the girls.

"Pete, that girl is so beautiful," I said. "Such a luxurious ass."

Peter looked the girl over and shrugged, "I hardly look at them any more. That's really faithful. It just doesn't phase me any more. I hardly see them. I mean I have mine and the mystery is gone."

I stared at the young girls some more, their veiled shyness, the sheer black stockings shadowing their legs. It drove me into a crippling Biblical passion to see the young girls who were sometimes sheltered between curtain and window looking out at me. It could drive me to my knees and make me sacrifice everything. It was terrible, the jealousy I could feel because Stern had one.

Some children began to cry in the arms of their mothers and there was a lot of cackling and hushing and offering of

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candies. The good humor and intensity of life in the bus made one forget how poor the people were, but you could see that the children weren't healthy, were badly proportioned, poorly fed, and bruised. A beautiful little girl in the seat in front of us peered at me over her mother's shoulder. Her mouth was like a bit of candy, and her light caramel eyes, with a black ring around the iris, hardly blinked. She wouldn't return my smile. I could feel in the quiet sadness flowing from that little girl's eyes all the tragedy of suffering and poverty in these people, the misery; and the girl called her mother to turn and see the tears that had come to my eyes.

"*É mortò*," a woman standing in the aisle screamed.

Pete stood up. A woman was sobbing and tearing at her clothes. "It's terrible," said Peter Stern. With the woman's cry pity left me as fast as it had come. I didn't want to know what Stern thought was terrible. Out the window I saw the sea where a heavy wind lifted spray into the air off the tops of the large waves and smeared the sky with spume. I felt suddenly hungry and remembered that I hadn't eaten all day. Stern made me hungrier, the way he was involved in the tragedy on the bus. He absorbed the wailing of the woman so it hardly reached me, as if I were in a different country. Food. A bowl of spaghetti cooked *al dente* and smothered with *cozze* in tomato sauce.

"Man, am I starved," I said to the back of Stern's head.

He turned to me. "That woman's kid is dead," he said, looking down. "But I can't see the kid."

I looked at the black coagulation of women converged on the screaming. Even the beautiful young girls had melted into that mass of motherhood. My little girl too had turned to watch, her face still lovely and expressionless, and when she turned and saw my face again she smiled, and I couldn't control a little quiet laughter, and she laughed too, and reached out to touch my cheek. It all seemed comical to me, that black draped monolith of motherhood; and Stern's face contorted with mean curiosity. I loved that little girl who smiled at me because our life had its own kind of humor, apart from the rest, unpredictable, as the wind beating great, laughing waves against the seawall.

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By the time we stopped in Gallipoli the woman had fainted and needed to be carried off the bus. We couldn't see the dead child but I watched my little girl leave her mother's arms and disappear like a windblown leaf down a stairway to the dock. Her father was a fisherman. I was smiling, but the wind drew tears from my eyes.

"That's too terrible," Stern said meekly, as the town soaked up the action. "You see that kind of thing here and it tears you apart."

"You look torn apart. Let's find someplace to eat."

"*Oy vey*," Stern slapped his hands to his cheeks. "Eat. I'm paralyzed. How can you say eat now?"

"Eat. Eat. Eat. I'm famished, Stern."

"If you had any feelings you'd be destroyed."

"I don't have your feelings, but I did miss breakfast."

"You live in a damned icebox."

I looked away from Stern, across the spray-glazed bridge that connected the old town with the Salento, a little peninsula that is the heel of Italy's boot. Gallipoli is a tiny island in the Gulf of Taranto with a bridge to the mainland where some more modern dwellings have sprouted, and a faceless church. The main piazza of the town is just across the bridge on the island, near the small harbor. Neither of the two bars there are very elegant, but all the men of the town strut from one to another before dinner, taking their *aperitivo*, and conversing. Stern and I compromised and mellowed ourselves over a drink in one of those bars.

"Oh no," I spotted a student of mine talking with some friends in the piazza. "I forgot he lives in Gallipoli." I jabbed Stern and pointed.

"Who's that?"

"That guy. The prisoner of war. Nicola Ticinese. The one who brings me those two liters of wine every week. He always wants to practice his English. He's going to ask us to dinner if he spots us."

"No," Stern said. "I couldn't take any of that today. Don't let him see us."

Nicola Ticinese spotted me just as Stern ducked under the

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table, and he spread his arms and came my way. He was a huge, dark, robust, happy Fascist who had learned some English as a British prisoner of war.

"Remember," Stern mumbled. "Be firm. I don't want to eat dinner with him."

"Ah, professors," he exclaimed. "You are here and I am very happy. You will come eat dinner at my house, yes."

Stern jabbed me. "No, Kulik, no."

There was nothing I could do. He payed for our drinks, and stood us up to introduce us to his friends and show off his English, and threw his arms over our shoulders and said, "Now I will go home to tell my mother that you will eat with us, and then I will come back here to get you."

"No. Don't put yourself to any trouble for us," I tried to back out weakly.

"No trouble. It's an honor to have the professors eat with us." His chest was puffed out like a rooster's, as he glanced around at his friends who admired the way he spoke English. Stern kept jabbing me, but there was nothing I could do.

"You wait here for me," he said, and hopped on his motorscooter.

"Let's get out of here quick," Stern said when our host was out of sight.

"We can't do that," I said. "Besides, it might be interesting."

"The hell it might. Guaranteed boredom." Stern looked at me with loathing. "Shit. You're like butter. You have to be firm. You have to be resolute."

The little piazza was emptying for the midday meal and the shutters were dropping over the shops. Seamen came up from the seawall and the few clerks and laborers wandered slowly to their homes. The little town, with its crooked stone houses, was filling with the rich, midday silence I loved. A motorscooter sputtered and the huge form of Nicola Ticinese draped in a green wool overcoat broke from between the buildings.

Nicola's house was built around a small courtyard off the

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main street. The rooms lay in a complex of levels and half levels that finally evolves in old houses that have been renovated and adjusted over centuries. We stopped before a cave-like room, windowless, the only light the glow of a charcoal fire and the pale blue flame of a little three-burner gas stove. His mother was cooking in there, and we greeted her though we could hardly see her dressed in black, her white hair a wisp of smoke.

He led us into the dining room and introduced us to his cousin who was already seated at the table. The man greeted us politely, but seemed angry, restless at the table, a thin, nervous man who kept looking with disdain at his food and nibbling it as if he were doing the meal a favor.

"My name is Aldo," he said. His spectacles slipped down his nose whenever he wrinkled his brow to speak. "Do you know that Nicola is a Fascist, *disgraziato*."

"My cousin is full of opinions." Nicola said. He filled our glasses with Punt e Mes. "And he's always right," he laughed. "What can you say when someone is always right?"

The half-witted servant girl came in carrying bowls of pasta and beans, and she stood for a moment across the table from Stern and me watching, her eyes slightly crossed, her grin crooked.

"She's a little crazy," the mother said, "but we let her work for us. What can I do?"

"My mother's an old lady, and she's going to die soon," Nicola winked at us and laughed. "But this one," he grabbed the girl around the hips. "Come over here and shake hands with the Americans." The girl looked at her chafed hands, and then rubbed them vigorously on her smock, and offered them to us with virile enthusiasm. They were so big that my hand disappeared into her grip.

Aldo lifted his glass when the girl left. "*A l'America*," he said. "*E la Democrazia Cristiana*."

"*E alla bomba atomica*," Nicola raised his glass.

"*Disgraziato*."

Nicola laughed into his glass.

"*Professore*," said the mother as we began to eat, "I apolo-

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gize for this humble meal; if we had known you were coming. Once, when my husband Vittorio was alive, lawyers used to come, and professors, and surgeons, all the best people of the province, to eat at my house." She was very old, deflated in her skin.

"No. This is wonderful." I relished a mouthful for her.

"Ah, you flatter me." She fanned her face with her stained napkin. "Tell me, *professore*, do you like the *triglie*?"

"I love them," I said, not knowing what they were.

"You see, Nicola, if the wind wasn't blowing today, we would have had *triglie* for the *professore*. But the fishermen didn't go out today, so I'm sorry. The *triglie* of Gallipoli are famous over the whole world."

"My mother is an old weak woman, but she's a good cook," Nicola placed his plump, dimpled hand on her forearm. "And I like to eat."

"You eat too much," said Aldo. "You're too fat."

"My cousin is right." Some beans leaked to his chin as he laughed, "I'm too fat and my mother is too old. When there was *Il Duce*, Aldo, then things were good, eh. Now I can't even find a job."

At the mention of the dictator's title Aldo's spectacles clanked to the rim of his plate. "*Disgraziato*. You don't want a job. You want to walk around the streets with a big club and make people drink fusel oil. *Disgraziato*."

Aldo ate with quick nibbles, not enjoying a bite. He seemed to prefer taking jabs at his cousin. In the serving girl Stern found a persistent distraction. She seemed to like him. When she picked up his plate he leaned his head back against her nice breasts. Nicola thought this was hilarious, and kept winking at Stern and making the gesture on his cheek with his forefinger that men use in the south when they see a beautiful girl.

The mother kept looking at me with a peculiar kind of yearning, and when the servant brought in the veal roast she finally said, "Oh, *professore*, if my Nicola could only find a job. Then he could marry his *fidanzata* and I could die. I want to die, because I'm such an old woman, but I can't leave my son without a woman? How would he get along?"

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"Don't worry about me, Mamma. I'm forty-three years old. I can always get along. I'm not a little boy."

"Stern," I said, my words covered with bile, "will have a wife soon. He's getting married." Stern stared into his plate.

"So young to get married," the mother said. "How old are you?"

Stern wouldn't answer. "He's almost thirty," I volunteered.

"Ahhhh," they moaned, "a regular youngster. It isn't good to get married too young."

"And besides," I said, watching the words troop out, "he's Jewish, and she, of course, is Catholic." I didn't want to say all that.

"Kulik, Jesus," Stern tried to kick me under the table, but caught the table leg and tipped Aldo's wine glass into his lap. Aldo apologized for the interruption.

"*Jesus e Gesù*," Nicola explained to his mother. "We are Jewish too," Nicola laughed again, that laugh always joyless, a deep shuddering of nerves. Stern glanced about at the crucifix on the wall, the little plaster madonnas, the faded pictures of nativities and pietas. "Sometimes in Naples, when I was very young, I went to synagogue," Nicola said.

"Why all these Christian things?" Stern asked.

"My mother likes them," Nicola said. "They're, how can I put it, decorative things, they're pretty."

Stern sat brooding for a moment, handling his wine glass. "How can you be a Fascist if you're a Jew?"

"Ah hah!" Aldo raised his fork. "*Punto!*"

Nicola laughed again. "Mussolini," he said, affectionately, "was not such an evil man as Hitler. To be a Fascist is not to be a Nazi. The Jews, after all..."

"But a Jew, and a Fascist, that's..."

Aldo leaned towards Stern, pointing his spoon at Nicola, "It was a case of every fool following a fool, especially this one. Such tales of glory for our little Italy." Aldo held his breath for a moment and looked as if he was about to say something more but he got up instead, and looked at Stern and me. "Don't let my cousin corrupt you. I have to be back in Bari so I must leave, and my apologies." He shook our

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hands, pointed to his cousin and said *disgraziato* once more, and left.

Nicola's laughter never stopped. "My cousin makes seventy thousand lire a month, that's the difference." He plugged his mouth with a stalk of chicory. Nicola turned as the serving girl entered and grabbed her apron, holding on till he finished chewing. "You don't think she's crazy," he said. "Watch this." He rose, and dragging the girl with him, got a bottle of sweet wine from the credenza, and poured her a tumblerful which she finished in one swallow. He poured another.

"Nicola," the mother whined. "The wine costs money. Too much to waste on that one."

"Be quiet," he snapped. He fed the girl four glasses in all until she began to giggle hysterically. "The tweest. Dance the tweest," Nicola said, and started to clap. The girl went through a few contortions, her mouth twisting like an epileptic's. "You see what I mean? She's crazy."

"I like them crazy," Stern said, and goosed her a couple of times as she danced.

"You do, you do. It's true." Nicola laughed and grabbed Stern's wrist to slap the girl's buttock as he sent her out.

"*Professore.*" The mother tugged me to her side when we rose from the table. "How is my boy Nicola doing at school?"

I began to hiccup. "He's a good boy, *un bravo ragazzo.*" Nicola was more than ten years older than I.

"*Professore,*" she repeated, with great deference. "I'm an old woman, and my Nicola isn't so young any more; *un ragazzo*, yes, but not so young. Please do something for me because I'm so old I can't take care of him any more. Let him get a degree so he can get a job and marry his *fidanzata* and I can die."

I kept hiccuping and she brought me a cup of cold water to sip on. I didn't know what Nicola had been telling his mother about the school, but he was obviously misrepresenting it. It gave no real degree. It was just a place for language dilettantes to practice their accents, or for students to get some extra instruction. Stern and I functioned as language whores, making accent available for paying customers. It was a sick, hopeless

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job for us, and an expensive, near worthless proposition for the students. The expense was what probably made Nicola represent it to his mother as more than it was. How could I answer her? I wished I could be like Stern, glib, expansive, insincere. He was standing with Nicola in a corner having a great conversation, enjoying himself more, it seemed to me, than he should be, as reluctant as he had been to come for dinner. Touching a little ass had turned him on. I tried to gather the syllables of compassion I had learned in Italian, so much easier in that language than in my own, and with what seemed to me the most open duplicity, I assured her that I would do what I could. Stern, across the room, was in some kind of conference with her vulgar, barbaric son, whom I didn't really dislike, though his overflowing gestures made me uneasy. He was amusing, at least; but I didn't want to fake a friendship with him. Stern looked pleased with himself, as if he'd closed a successful deal.

"Well then," said Nicola, coming my way. "Then you will stay with us tonight."

"No," I said. "We really need to go back."

"But Peter already has accepted. There's a bus for Lecce before noon tomorrow." It was obviously a sign of status for him to have the two American professors stay overnight.

"You accepted?" I asked rudely, and looked at Stern. He shrugged.

"Good," said the mother. "I shall make the bed in the big room, where Antonio and I used to sleep, where Nicola was born.

While our hosts settled down for their midday *riposo* Stern and I went back to the sea.

"I hate those people," Stern said. "They're scum."

"Then why did you accept that invitation?"

"To be Jews and Fascists and inhuman idiots and scumbags."

"Then why," I repeated, "did you accept the invitation?" We walked slowly down the narrow stone street, whispering, because our voices were the only sounds.

"I had to."

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"You didn't have to. You have to be firm, resolute. You're the butter."

"I couldn't. I had to be courteous, in the face of all their grossness. The filth of their lives." He suddenly looked at me when he recalled my transgression. "And why did you have to mention my marriage and the Catholic and Jewish thing, rolling me over in the shit? It never would have come up."

The wind was thick and warm, laden with the smells of kitchens. I wanted some release from the pressure, some relaxation. "I just think you ought to know more about it," I said. "I think that this marriage thing is more dangerous than you imagine." Stern lifted his arm as if to wipe away the sound of my words. "And perhaps too I'm a little jealous of your success, and wanted to see you squirm a little, maybe that was part of it."

For that Stern gave me a strangely humble look, and was about to say something when we hit the piazza again, and the wind nearly blew us over. We leaned into it and made our way over to the seawall where a crowd was gathered, unusual at midday. A large fishing ship had capsized in the small harbor and some little boats were braving the rough water to try to right it. The wind that surrounded us made us more peaceful with each other. The spectators, with coats flapping, were arguing what should be done. They kept glancing at us. The capsized ship, we learned, was Rumanian. The big-bellied old sloop was lounging in the choppy water like a bathing pontiff while the little fishingboats were trying to get close enough to tie their ropes through the exposed gunwale. It was impossible.

"You'll have to wait till the wind dies," a fisherman next to me said. He had a beautiful windburned face, with eyes like the eyes of the little girl on the bus.

I smiled and shrugged and looked away from him. By this time a large number of the spectators had gathered around Stern and myself. "He doesn't understand," the sailor said to one of his neighbors. Another man stepped forward from the crowd and began to demonstrate the idea by pointing from me to the ship and puffing his cheeks up with wind.

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"Stern," I nudged him. "They think we're Rumanian."

Stern looked around darkly from under the folds of his brow. "We're Americans," he said. They all laughed. "Why don't they believe me?" he asked. But it was obvious that they had made up their minds that we were Rumanians, and even our passports, if we showed them, would have been taken for a trick, some kind of counterespionage. They had decided we were Rumanians, and Rumanians we were. The idea pleased me.

"*Maledetti Americani*," one voice rose from the group, and a number of fists were raised in a Communist salute.

"We're not Rumanians, we're Americans," Stern said, but it was futile. We weren't dressed right. We had no car, no children, no cameras, and we didn't display the arrogant naïveté of the Americans who sometimes drifted down from the Air Force missile installation in Taranto.

"We'd better move," I said, and Stern and I pushed through the crowd and began walking to the center of the piazza. A group of them began to follow us, shouting for us to wait.

Stern panicked. "What will we do? They're all Communists and they hate Americans. We can't fool them for too long."

"They won't hurt us. They're Italians and warm in the heart."

"We've got to do something. We can't fool them." Stern stopped and turned around to confront them. I stopped too, and waited. There were about eight of them approaching us. They looked like a gang of hoods from Little Italy, and I felt almost the fear I used to feel on the streets in New York; but these people were gentler, I knew them, they were humane. They stopped in front of us, talking among themselves, generally jovial.

"Look," Stern said, stepping forward, "you've made a mistake. We're not Rumanian sailors. We're American." Although Stern spoke as clearly as he could in Italian, no one in the group understood him because they had anticipated his Rumanian to be incomprehensible. They all laughed, and agreed with him. A small, wiry hunchback stepped forward

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and extended his hand. "I am Ettore Crocino," he said. "But you have it wrong," Stern said. The hunchback laughed at what he took to be a joke of Stern's. "Yes. Yes. You'll come and be our guest. I am the secretary of the party here in Gallipoli. You'll come. Yes. To our little meeting room. We can talk there." The fellow took my arm and started leading me away, and Stern was caught up in the midst of the rest of them. I was a little frightened by this hunchback who was holding my arm. He was one of the few Italians I've ever seen who looked fanatical, his features condensed into rigid wrinkles, his eyes dry in a slow, solid glitter.

"We are Rumanian," I said to him.

"I know. You are lucky."

"Kulik, you're an idiot," Stern shouted. "Tell them the truth."

"Shaddup, comrade," I shouted back.

The sound of that word seemed to please the Italians, and they passed it around among themselves, "Shaddup, camerata. Shaddup, camerata."

"Iss bucksoo in dose Romanskiye," I spoke to my intense friend with such ease in nonsense syllables that I felt like the hero of a spy novel.

"No, I don't speak Rumanian. I study Russian, but Rumanian, nothing."

"Don't feel bad," I reassured him. "We are a small country. Russian is important to you."

"Small, but at least Communist," he said, tightening his grip on my arm.

The party headquarters was on the other end of the piazza, high on the seawall in a crooked salmon-red building. It was dimly lit inside where in the front room two young men played ping-pong. There was an old billiard table, some folding chairs, and a Coca-Cola icechest painted red. We were led to an inner room where the party secretary had his desk. There was a large table for meetings, and books in Russian were scattered on the various shelves. Above the desk were two huge portraits, one of Lenin tinted with photographic coloring, the other of Palmiro Togliatti looking tired and fatherly.

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"Ah," said the party secretary, pacing around, and starting to speak with eloquence, and immense gestures. "Mussolini, the pig...the fat church...imperialists...the parasite priests." He was as proud of his eloquence as any Southern Italian, and didn't care that we had nothing to say.

"What are we going to do?" Stern whispered to me. He was scared. He looked like an adolescent in a whorehouse. "We'll be in real trouble when the Rumanians really get here."

"Just keep your cool," I said. I really didn't believe we could suffer anything more than embarrassment. The room was filling now with the Communists of Gallipoli, all of them rehearsing the greeting, "Shaddup, camerata," which they had learned from us. They filed past us in a receiving line repeating the words, and listening to us repeat them to get the accent better. Next to us the secretary's voice had risen an octave as he recited for us all the miseries of the day. One huge, thick fisherman, with hands like olive roots, stopped in front of us and stared expressionless. Stern moved close to me till our shoulders touched. "Holy shit," he said.

"You want some Aranciata?" the fisherman uttered.

"Yes," we said.

The wrinkles in his face spread into a hundred grins as he rushed off to the icechest, and returned with two bottles of Aranciata San Pellegrino. He watched us with great pleasure as we drank it. "That's Italian stuff," he said.

Another group of Italians came in, this time escorting three heavy-set, dark Slavs. "Now's the time," I said to Stern.

"Shit," he muttered.

"Just do what I do," I said. I approached the newcomers, offering them both hands, and saying "Shaddup, camerata," touched both their cheeks with my lips. They fell. They took us to be the leaders, I imagine, of the Gallipoli Communist Party, and repeated the greeting, "Shaddup, camerata." One of the Slavs tried to speak with Stern in broken French, but Stern played dumb, kissed him on both cheeks, and got a big, wet, comradely kiss in return. It had worked. They were all doing it, loving each other up, as we slipped past the Coke cooler, and into the receding wind.

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Stern whistled softly. "That was an international adventure," I said.

"It's a good thing," he said, "that we're friends."

I began to laugh. "You're like James Bond," he said. "You should make movies, or become a hero of a novel series." We both began to laugh and snap our fingers, and to walk through the streets intoning the rhythms of rock and roll, "Bo Diddley, Little Stevie Wonder, Charles Berry, Ray Charles, yeah."

We spent most of the rest of the day drinking wine and laughing, and arrived back at Nicola's house rather late. Nicola was already in bed but his mother had waited up to feed us. We ate again, and she showed us to our bed. It was a huge double bed beneath a vaulted ceiling frescoed blue with stars and faded angels. I wasn't really tired but Stern insisted on going to bed, so I lay down beside him and waited for sleep. The door opened after a moment and the half-wit servant came in dressed in a housecoat.

"I'm here," she said.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, harshly.

Stern had already stood up in his t-shirt and shorts.

I suddenly understood. "That's why you accepted the invitation. He promised you the girl."

Stern grinned and stood there. The girl's chapped hands held her housecoat closed. Pete had a huge erection, like an oak club, and he took a few slow steps toward her, her idiotic smile reflected in his passionate grin.

"Nicola sent me," the girl said.

"Why didn't you tell me you knew about this?" I pulled myself up to a sitting position.

"I just never thought of telling you." He didn't take his eyes off the girl. "It just didn't cross my mind."

"Stern, Stern, Stern," I said, pivoting into my slippers, and standing up. "What about your true love?"

"Ahhhhhh," he said, spreading both arms and engulfing the poor, dull head of the serving girl. "I thought you had that figured out. I was putting you on, of course. You know damned well that something like that is impossible around

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here. You've got to take it when you can get it." He stepped back from the girl and pointed at her with his palm up.

The girl let her housecoat drop to her feet to show us her delicious body, the kind of body that on a woman I care about makes me walk around on my knees: slender waist, despite all the work she did, large, blossoming, valentine hips, a box that looked soft as new grass, breasts full and round and blue-veined. She would have fared better, taught some simple charm, as a prostitute.

Stern took a few steps, and paused, and smiled at me with strained sincerity, "Would you like to try first?"

"Your manners overwhelm me," I said.

"Don't criticize me," he said sharply, challenging me. "After the way you've been acting."

I pulled out of his turf.

For weeks after that I regretted not having used the girl, and after Stern repeated his descriptions, true or not, of how good she had been, I tormented myself with fantasies about her body. I could never go back to claim her. I remember feeling at that moment that the girl's being thrust on us in that room beneath those angels was too vulgar and inhuman for even my icy emotions. I left the room and quietly left the house to return to the sea. A strange sentiment suddenly came over me, as if the sea had possessed me and was brimming at my eyes. I was crying. The wind was tender, had suddenly changed to a gentle sirocco that crossed the peninsula bearing mist. I sat on the seawall and watched the lights of the fishing boats off the shore, and heard the fishermen call intermittently like bells into the wind. I was smiling. Stern's little deceptions, practiced on me, made him seem more my friend, this baring of a little weakness in him. Between friends, I figured, little betrayals are as irrelevant as beauty, or difficult habits. Friends tolerate the discomfort and still hang around.

A great red moon at the horizon flecked the water with carmine. The sea suddenly swelled with the melancholy richness of my life. I had a friend, Stern, who was a little weaker than myself, I thought, in some things. I had chosen to be there, by a sea as sensual as a woman's lips, in a wind as warm.

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I was alone. I was aging. It was easy by that sea to stuff oneself with age like a ripening pod. I remembered the woman's cry on the bus and I shuddered with grief. I wanted to engulf the whole, grieving world. That poor serving girl, all ripeness, what conflagration of genes had produced her? I tried to think of everything I would have liked to tell Stern about myself, and I said my name and his as a small boat came in and tied up silently at the dock and five men jumped out and began to lay out their nets in the lamplight. They pulled seaweed and sea urchins out of the webbed cord, lifting the heavy nets in billows and stretching them across the dock. They moved evenly through their hard work. I sat on the seawall and repeated my name to myself and listened to their songs.

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Two Portraits: Gustave Lerouge
Arthur Cravan

Blaise Cendrars

Selected and Translated by William Brandon

Gustave Le Rouge, popular writer (1867-1938)—specialist in magazine serials, published innumerable horror tales, among them, "The Sculptor of Human Flesh." Blaise Cendrars has left a number of portraits of this astonishing personage.

Dictionnaire Seghers

Gustave Lerouge

Gustave Lerouge, who died several years ago on the eve of the Second World War, was the author of 312 works (in any case, that is the number of his works in my library), many of which were in several volumes and one, *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius*, was a 150-page masterpiece of scientific detective fiction in 56 installments; others were not even signed since Gustave Lerouge often worked for publishers of the seventeenth order. How to define his multicolored versatility, his lively and spontaneous erudition never at a loss for arguments? He was no drudge, no hack; even in the

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obscure anonymous brochures that were sold only at newsstands and in neighborhood or provincial notion shops, he was never unworthy of his craft as a writer which he took very seriously and of which he was very proud. On the contrary, it was in these unsigned popular publications—fat volumes such as a key to dreams, a cookbook (which I have recommended to all the gourmets I know)—and in the unbound pamphlets, often a simple printed sheet folded in four, eight, or sixteen pages that was sold for two, four, ten sous at Metro entrances on Saturday nights (I speak of the antediluvian times before 1914!)—"The Language of the Flowers," "Choose Your Color I Will Tell You Who You Are!" "How to Affix Postage Stamps to Express Sentiments," "The Art of Telling Fortunes with Cards," "The Lines of the Hand," "The Great Albert"—that he really let himself go, calling on science and erudition, not for a vain encyclopedic display (Lerouge had read all the books and gone over all the university theses and a prodigious number of technical and specialized reviews which he received daily), not for style, but to give the facts, the facts, nothing but the facts, to say the most with the fewest possible words and, finally, to bring forth an original idea free of any system, isolated from any association, seen as if from another world, from a hundred different points of view at the same time and with added views from telescopes and microscopes, and clarified into its very essence. It was acrobatics and prestidigitation. This juggler was a very great anti-poetic poet, and I would give all the poetry and prose of Stéphane Mallarmé for his ephemeral pamphlet entitled "100 Recipes for Using Leftovers" which sold for five sous, a little domestic treatise for suburban housewives, precise in its utilitarian ingeniousness, and besides, the most exquisite collection of prose poems in French literature. But Lerouge denied this! He had intended no such thing, he told me when I complimented him and praised this marvelous little work to the skies, threatening to include it some day in an anthology. He was frightfully timid. And it took me years to understand that this timidity, which poisoned his life and which manifested itself by a complete absence of practi-

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cal sense approaching the masochism of the damned in hell, was the expression of a monstrous pride.

An example: having brought him a Japanese edition of his *Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius*, the novel of the modern world in which his love of adventure, his mystery-fan's taste for intrigue, his penchant for metaphysics, and his gift as a scientific visionary had created the epitome of Nineteenth Century novels, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to Wells by way of Poe, Gustave Aymard, the Balzac of "Seraphita," the Villiers of *L'Isle Adam* and *L'Éve Future*, the Russian naturalist school, and the theater of horror. When I presented him with this Japanese translation, to my surprise Lerouge admitted to me that *Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius* had already been translated into *thirty-two* languages and that the French edition published in Canada had sold 800,000 copies and that a new printing would reach a million. When I mentioned that he evidently hid his good fortune under a bushel and must be the richest man of letters in the world, he confessed with pride that he had sold all publishing rights to all editions for the ridiculous price of 400 francs, and that he no longer had anything to gain from it, not a sou from the innumerable French editions, from the translations, from the different versions, second and third publication rights, serial rights, from all the various adaptations of this novel that had traveled around the world. Lerouge, who had nothing, prided himself on this as if it were a clever trick he had played on the publishers who were making fortunes at his expense but who had never succeeded in nailing him down to steady employment. "I am free," he said, "my pen is not for sale!"

He had the ferocious genius of destruction, a self-destructiveness that he carried so far as to transform into sadism in his private life. It was enough to see him at home only once to grasp this; one felt uneasy in spite of the cordial reception and left as quickly as was decently possible.

He signed his work indifferently Gustave Lerouge or Gustave Le Rouge, but in his own home he was LE ROUGE

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for real, a tyrant, a maniac who found red blood sweet. He was fearsome; and took pleasure in being feared. And in feeling the fear himself.

Marthe was a circus equestrienne, an imposing and haughty woman. Like Lerouge she was stocky, with a short neck and short legs, but she paraded when she walked, her empress' profile in great contrast to the fugitive profile, like that of a badger, of Lerouge, who had a tendency to stoop. There was a twenty-year age difference between these two lovers. But the point is, Marthe's face was split in two.

I have known three women in my life who had dog faces, but of these three maimed to the depths of their femininity, Marthe, the most courageous, was the most horrible to view. The first two had been victims of accidents, disfigured by shattered glass; I've always believed that Marthe must have been the victim of vengeance; she must have received the cut of a whip, a blow dealt with enormous violence, a lash that cut her face in two from top to bottom, the forehead, the nose, the lips and her glorious chin—she must have been exceedingly attractive before.

Each time I saw Marthe at Lerouge's—and I frequented Lerouge for thirty years—I was revolted yet intrigued by this willful woman who could not be subjugated by disfigurement, illness, or age, no more than by the continual outrages Lerouge forced upon her all that time—so resourceful was she in her desire to conquer. A week after our first meeting, Marthe left Lerouge to live with Antoinette, a girl she had seduced and taught minor circus arts...

Marthe. I never knew how she had been maimed but in view of her profession and her behavior, I was persuaded that she must have received the whip blow from a professional. Her atrocious scar was a half-finger wide; this cleft seemed to contain between its distended borders a blood-red print, the scaly outline of a cord, the exact print of the instru-

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ment of mutilation; the braided thong of, say, a carter's whip; and as time passed the scar became more and more repellent, overran its banks and grew into a sort of purplish cockscomb, ragged and hanging, and eventually became diseased and purulent and gave off a nauseating odor. In her old age, Marthe had the face of a leper, but she still did not give in. A helpless invalid, she faced to the end Lerouge who had become bloated and swollen and who continued to treat her with a mocking and refined sadism. Love or hate, enjoyment, jealousy, reciprocal madness or mutual pleasure, sickness of soul, troubled minds, terror or ecstasy—who is to say, who has the key? The mystery of couples. Incantation and hypnotism, something holds them, unites them, laces them together, rivets these two solitary sufferers who could only procreate monsters: he, the intellectual, struggled diabolically to suppress her passion and she, the sensualist, with a satanic malice, tried her best as an experienced old voluptuary to satiate and gorge him with her wild perversities; he created his books and she her scandals; these offspring were the products of the overflowing imagination of a man of letters and the debauchery of a bareback rider's *derrière*. But who was the victim, who the torturer, which one dragged the other at his feet in order to triumph and deceive? Love and literature...

I never knew Gustave Lerouge when he wasn't in financial difficulties. (He had a little income from something, I never knew what, but it was barely sufficient for the upkeep of his library and to cover expenses of the little laboratory where he absorbed himself in chemistry experiments of unknown results.) At the time of our first lunch at Saint-Ouen (Marthe was a cordon-bleu and since Lerouge was a great eater and gourmet, she also held him by his belly's gratefulness) he had seemed almost prosperous—oh, an entirely relative prosperity: the little Chinese garden, the tropical fish, the toucan, the table service, the silver, the glassware, the meticulous

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cleanliness of the house. But this did not last. A week later, immediately after Marthe abandoned Lerouge to set up house with Antoinette, the toucan died. In the following weeks the tropical fish floated belly up, the ponds in the garden dried up, the little garden was invaded by weeds...

The spanking clean interior of the cottage was covered little by little with a film of greasy dirt which soon vanquished everything, even the piles of books and papers that disappeared in a cloud of dust, dust which gradually filled the glassware lined up on the sideboard in the dining room that was invaded by the sulphuric smells of the laboratory and the stink of the W.C., to which was added, when Marthe moved back in 1914, the characteristic and sickening odor of the lupus that ate up her face and the rancid drugs of an invalid confined to her chair. (I can remember leaving Lerouge's cottage on the run for the Ratodrome Bar where I would pour a bottle of rum or cognac over my hands and face and empty another bottle down my throat to wash and disinfect myself internally and externally, so strong was my impression of having breathed plague and cholera during my visit.) Naturally this descent into poverty didn't happen at one stroke. It was much more insidious; there were many ups and downs. (Lerouge worked regularly, although anonymously, for the *Petit Parisien* which kept him in pocket money.) It took years and years for the misery to become absolute. And this was due really not so much to financial difficulties as to the moral wretchedness of these two beings who continued their secret manufacture of evil as they aged. What could have happened between them for their hate to be so tenacious? I don't know. Any supposition would be permissible. But I hold principally to literary influences—sadism.

With somebody as timid and imaginative as Lerouge this sadism could express itself in two fashions: first, until 1914 (and also probably under the influence of absinthe), in the famous bloodcurdling assassinations of the great adventure novels he signed Le Rouge; then, after the return of Marthe to the fold, his financial relations with her.

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At the time of her great days when she was still with circuses, Marthe burdened him with the expense of her rollicking extravagance, and then, when she had bookings abroad for her act with Antoinette, she sent checks and money orders, newspaper clippings, posters and photographs to humiliate the old man and prove her independence.

Marthe was the owner of the cottage at Saint-Ouen. I think she also owned others in the neighborhood. In any case, she had some income coming in. She was never entirely dependent upon Lerouge, except for the superfluous items that women must always have. But when the ex-equestrienne could no longer work, Lerouge took his revenge for her humiliations and the misconduct by refusing to make money with his books to pay for the little luxuries she still desired; and since he was never lacking in ideas, he satisfied himself with 400 francs for a novel like *Le Mystérieux Docteur Cornélius* which was a worldwide success, and in refusing at the last minute the million he later set as a price for the film adaptation of this single work; 400 francs because a mirrored wardrobe cost 400 francs in those days, and each time that Lerouge could get hold of that amount he delivered a mirrored wardrobe to Marthe and kept this up until his death, when I counted nineteen wardrobes with mirrors crowded into the cottage at Saint-Ouen surrounding the grimacing mountebank nailed there to her chair, seeing her reflection on all sides as she waited to die.

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Technically correct in billing himself as Oscar Wilde's nephew, Arthur Cravan was related to the family of Wilde's wife, Constance Lloyd. He made the avant-garde scene in pre-World-War-I Paris, where from 1912 to 1914 he published his magazine Maintenant, *an exercise in total denunciation that has since come to be regarded as precursive Dada, and was reprinted for the Paris Dada Exhibition of 1957. The last issue of Francis Picabia's Dadaist (and anti-Dadaist) periodical,* 391, *presented on the title page a portrait of Arthur Cravan which had been drawn several years before. Cravan by that time, 1924, had disappeared in Mexico or Central America and was presumed dead—some say knifed in a dance-hall fight, others, lost at sea.*

Blaise Cendrars, who indicts Cravan as the "inventor" of Dada, was an intimate of Apollinaire, the Cubists and The Six, and poet-publicist for Delaunay, Léger, Chagall and Modigliani. He was not a professed Dadaist, but some of his writings have nevertheless entered the Dada canon, notably La Fin du Monde Filmée par l'Ange N.-D. (1919), *with illustrations by Fernand Léger.*

Cendrars' version of the beginnings of Dada is more than a sidelight on New York or Barcelona origins—by placing emphasis on pre-1915 people and events he argues a case for Dada's existence before its 1916–17 outburst in Zurich. Cendrars pretends to find its creation in the "troubled conscience" of the "deserter" Arthur Cravan loudly proving the world too absurd to be worth fighting for.

—WILLIAM BRANDON

Arthur Cravan

This is a wartime story of the poet Arthur Cravan who made up a threesome with Delaunay and me at the Bal Bullier where we danced the tango in mismatched silk socks; Robert wearing a dinner jacket half-red and half-green, Arthur black shirts unbuttoned to show blood-red tattoos and obscene inscriptions on his skin, the floating shirttails splotched with spots of fresh color (Cravan regularly sat on Delaunay's palette before going to the dance, which made Robert rave to such an extent over the price of lapis lazuli that he spoiled more than one of our evenings), and as for me, Chicago neckties more violent than American pickles and tomato sauce and more brilliant than parrot feathers; we carried on this riot of orphic harlequins for the plain hell of it and also to

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set a trap for Marinetti's Futurists whose permanent delegate to Paris, Gino Severini, wired Milan each night with details of our appearance, and this news spread influencing at Saint Petersburg the Rayonnisme of Larionov and of Gontcharova, the designer attached to Diaghilev's troupe, and was known and imitated even by the Futurists of Moscow, the celebrated chrome-yellow shirt of Mayakovski was the last echo of the fashion of our happy rampages in Paris.

The poet Arthur Cravan had an immense talent which he employed as badly as his immense physical strength; Arthur was a champion athlete, a boxer, but with the lame character of many semi-professionals who have been exhausted by intensive training; slaves to the splendid bodies they have produced, victims of their torsos and of their muscles, of the biceps they roll as a means of seducton and that bring them fame, money, women, ease, luxury, and finally, the softness that captures them while they are still less than thirty.

August 2, 1914, the day war was declared, the poet Arthur Cravan, "the nephew of Oscar Wilde," "poet and boxer," "the poet with the shortest haircut in the world," as he loved to qualify himself in his magazine *Maintenant* and on the Noctambules program where, several weeks before, he announced with much fanfare that he was going to commit suicide in public, that he would replace the traditional carafe of water by a bottle of absinthe and for the benefit of ladies or of a sister-soul he would give his lecture in a jock-strap and put his balls on the table—he did none of this at all, in his embarrassment involuntarily draining the carafe of water with such gulps as to be left spluttering when he abused Victor Hugo, not daring to brandish the empty revolver—not even loaded with a blank!—placed on the table, and making an exasperating lecture of such flatness that it should have brought him a sort of anti-success—at any rate before the audience of snobs and esthetes gathered by Van Dongen who had expected a mad performance. His friends hadn't even bothered to appear, sure of seeing him again the next day as alive and flabby as ever, and poor Arthur floundered, floundered, stricken with genuine embarrassment in the face of his announced

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pretenses....the day war was declared Arthur Cravan threw himself into the ocean and crossed with an indefatigable stroke, so intense was his panic, the wide mouth of the Bidassoa, fleeing like a streak from Hendaye Plage, where he was staying, to Fontarabie where he joined Robert Delaunay, the other big stiff, who had crossed the international bridge of Béhobie the evening before, before the closing of the frontier, and who was getting ready to take the train for Lisbon, bag-and-baggage, that is to say with palette, brushes, tubes of paint, rolls of virgin canvas, paintings, and all the family kit and caboodle, Madame, Baby, the Lithuanian nurse, and Madame Delaunay, his mother—a considerable moving operation.

Arthur joined the Delaunay caravan without hesitation, but he did not feel at ease in Lisbon among so many English, and when Portugal declared war, Arthur went on quickly to Spain where he lived some time in Madrid, still with Robert, who had not delayed in coming to join him. Sonia did the cooking for everyone and went into business with her mama-in-law; the two women opened a dressmaking shop.

It didn't particularly bother him to live by the needles of these two women, but Cravan felt uncomfortable any place in Europe. He wanted to go to America where he had relatives, but he had no more money, and the money he expected from Great Britain and Ireland never came; his brother had been drafted and his sister-in-law turned a deaf ear, relatives, friends, and acquaintances ignored his telegrams and appeals in all directions. He moved gently on one day to Barcelona to join Jack Johnson, the famous boxer, champion of the world, magnificent and lively Negro whom he had met in boxing gyms and training camps and had once guided around Paris and Berlin, making the rounds at Johnson's expense of the night spots of Montmartre and the Kurfürstendam, tossing off champagne, flicking cigars, all in the gallant and numerous and decadent company of drug addicts and homosexuals, and everybody free-loaded, of course.

In Barcelona, Jack Johnson was sporting about the port and the Chino bar. The Negro champion was more or less

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disqualified as result of raffish incidents and had already run afoul of the various police departments of Europe. He had his fill of them and dreamed of returning to the States and again taking up his serious career as a boxer, but he couldn't reach a decision because he had a string tied to him, a German baroness who followed him even to the off-limits bars where he took refuge; besides that, he didn't feel in condition and like Cravan, his funds were running low. I don't know who had the idea, but the two playmates agreed to meet in a sensational boxing match announced as the return to the ring of the champion of the world, the great Negro J.J. risking his title against the challenger Arthur Cravan, "the nephew of Oscar Wilde, poet and boxer, the poet with the shortest haircut in the world, etc., etc." The Spanish promoters of the event did it up in grand style. The advertising might have been for a corrida; posters all over the Barcelona streets, articles in the Catalan newspapers, and soon public interest was boiling; tickets were fought for, the price of seats went up and up—all this for a most lamentable event. Big Jack didn't stake or leave his title there, but all that remained of his honor, and he never again appeared in a ring. As for Cravan... handsome Arthur put up his guard, holding his two gloved fists in front of his face...

I have the details from an eyewitness of this encounter which was epoch-making and without parallel in the annals of the noble art of boxing. As customary, each of the adversaries had an assured purse. The amount doesn't matter too much. The night before the fight Cravan was able to get an advance from the managers, call it five thousand pesetas, and he reserved a place on a steamship which was to leave the next evening for New York. He said nothing of this to his pal Jack; but since he wasn't in shape to go more than three rounds, he did ask the Negro not to knock him down too soon and not to hit him too hard.

The match in Barcelona took place on a Sunday afternoon in I know not what unused arena. The introductions were made, and at the "Go!" of the referee, handsome Arthur put up his guard, carrying his two gloved fists in front of his face,

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lowering his head, pulling in his belly, doubled over in order to cover himself with his two elbows squeezed one against the other while he awaited the fatal blow, his neck between his shoulders, back bowed, without the slightest gesture, not even the hint of a feint, resembling a boxer and contented himself with turning round and round, *trembling visibly*. The Negro prowled around him like a big black rat around a Holland cheese, tried three times in a row to call him to order by three kicks to the rump, and then in an effort to loosen up the nephew of Oscar Wilde the Negro thumped him in the ribs, cuffed him a bit while laughing, encouraged him, swore at him, and at last all of a sudden furious Jack Johnson stretched him out cold with a formidable punch to the left ear, a blow worthy of a slaughterhouse, so fed up had he become. Cravan moved no more. The referee counted him out. The bell sounded the end of the bout. And Jack Johnson was proclaimed victor by a knockout. The affair hadn't lasted a minute. The Negro then had to defend himself against the Catalan public which protested with vehemence and invaded the ring and demanded its money back, sacked the arena, and set fire to the benches. As the rioting spread it was necessary to escort the champion of the world to the police station, and the managers were forced to comply with the crowd's demand: the box office take was refunded.

Big Jack was furious; he spent the night in the calaboose shouting for Arthur, swearing to have his skin, and the sergeant of the guard had to threaten him several times with a strait jacket.

While the Spanish promoters were looking for Cravan, while they were searching all over the city, handsome Arthur was locked up in his cabin on board the steamship which was already plunging through the ocean on its way to America, where he was sponging his left ear that was red, not from shame, but from the violent blow it had received. And from what I knew of him, he must have been thinking that he had come off pretty well and was doubtless saying to himself, "To save face is fine for the Chinese! Me, keeping my portrait *intact is what counts, and it's still there, my precious mug!*"

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And he must have smiled at himself in the mirror, placing his compresses with care.

In New York, the poet with the shortest haircut in the world had let his hair grow in order not to look draftable, and in all respects had changed his appearance; and the fat and flaccid and seductive nephew of Oscar Wilde no longer frequented the sporting milieu, but hangouts of like-feathered nestlings who had also been driven to New York by the wind of torment that whistled over Europe; and handsome Arthur flourished in the salons of photographers, and in the rooms of art dealers, where he proclaimed his own war, dada, DADA, the spokesman of a bad conscience, hurling his painless thunderbolt that left no dead or wounded, but fired with enthusiasm because it comforted his motley listeners made up of European deserters, internationalists, pacifists, neutralists, and one-hundred per-cent Americans ferociously isolationist, and all of this unleashed a thousand devils. "Art has no Fatherland!"

To recount the life of Arthur Cravan in New York would be to recount the history of the founding of Dadaism, and so I won't speak of it here—any more than the thyrsus-bearer of art-for-art Francis Picabia has yet talked of it, Picabia who saw Cravan every day in New York and, following his example, had the great moral courage to provide Leonardo da Vinci's "La Joconde" with a pair of Wilhelm II mustaches; any more than it has yet been recorded by the inventive Marcel Duchamp (and what was this malicious Parisian doing in New York—if not teaching love, teaching chess!) who saw Cravan every day in New York and who, falling under his influence, had the great moral courage to furnish the following guarantee to chamber pots put on sale in a store: "I declare that this household utensil is an authentic work of art!" and he followed this declaration with his signature in facsimile, which was for the initiates: "Rrose Sélavy"; any more than the grand mufti of Zurich has yet spoken of it—he did not know Cravan but in his disarray received, in 1917, with gratitude, the investiture of the new church from the hands of Picabia who was seeking refuge in Switzerland, ostensibly for the care of his chest and to undergo a drinker's

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drying out, but his valises full of DADA, boundless propaganda, campaign plans, manifestoes, bombs, works of Cravan's bad conscience, a new faith that the grand mufti Tristan Tzara hastened to communicate to his disciples at the Cabaret Voltaire and that the spiritual descendants of the dancer of the Bal Bullier and of the mumbler of the Noctambules received as the Apostles of the Holy Ghost.

In 1936, on a soupy day when I had to pay my hotel bill, I sold to Matarasso, the autograph dealer in the Rue Bonaparte, all that I had of Arthur Cravan: papers, letters, aquarelles, the draft of a long unpublished poem and a complete and rare collection of his magazine *Maintenant*, inserted in one number was the original of the famous procès-verbal of his duel with Apollinaire, his signature followed with the thirty-two titles that the poet-boxer gave himself, from "nephew of Oscar Wilde" to "taxi driver and burglar in Berlin"... a quarter of a century before Jean Genet. So goes the world.

Selections from *L'Homme Foudroyé*, *Rhapsodies Gitanes*, *Le Fouet*, and *Le Lotissement du Ciel*. © Editions Denoël.

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John Perreault

"The Historical Process"

The "historical process" begins as a small tube
attached to the left ventrical.
From here it joins the mainstream with a series
of by-products
connected to the main shaft
by a system of interlocking wheels.

This temperance causes the temperature
to rise
halfway up the spinal column,
disguising the chosen

as it reaches for
still further melodic incongruities.

Here, therefore, somewhere not yet the middle,
a house burns down
and a hole opens up.

Real time becomes imaginary ice roadblocks
that hurl the hourly imitation
of trailer camps and trailer trucks
into floral intervals.

Volunteer firetrucks escape the smoke
a logician makes
rapidly
with a piece at a time.

Good news, however, hovers
like an angel of deliverance
over the turbulence.

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It comes and it goes. It investigates
the secret passageways of a continent
and accidentally locates
the splendors of the thoroughly ordinary

The "historical process" ends as it began
in an explosion
detached from the world trade centers,
joining up with, as it were,
the expanded nerve centers
where, through a simplicity of gears
or a light network,
it is short-circuited by an interior view
not necessarily sacred,
not necessarily secular.
Tremendous sunspots
dictate tender disruptions
hardly visible
that cause

elastic roadways
to mimic looseness in the shape of
causeways,
engaging the flame.

From *The Houseboat Strip*

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Philip Whalen

The Grand Design

Top of the fountain jet
White diamond liquid sun fire

The Baby commits evil deeds unseen.

Snail shell, pearl shell, abalone.

Nautilus.
Octopus egg cases
eggs of shark

nest
range
purple stone mountain
green purple martin

What happened. The Baby broke it.

Something was there; we all enjoyed it. Now it is gone. We still have Baby. How shall we enjoy Baby.

Pickles, cheese, lettuce, tomato slices, mayonnaise, hard boiled egg, a little vinegar, raw mushrooms,.....however, Baby is too big and dirty.

Baby tied the snakes together in a bow knot. Ill-tempered little brute.

Morganatic marriage is the answer to an otherwise ruined life.
Let's rebuild Hadrian's villa.

Baby wears red frog-face pants and whistle shoes. He's about to begin torturing goldfish.

I told you that Meudon was out of the question. So we are, a marigold. Unworried fish, the water never so clear.

The hair. The hair is to be arranged later.

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We firmly believe in a tortoise with long hair. It lives a long time. Hokusai drew its picture.

(Try to believe: a fur frog...angora snake feather boa, Quetzalcoatl)...fuzzy salamander. All these are Siberian reptiles.

We have no protection against propaganda, lies or slander. It can all be fixed later.
It doesn't make any difference what you believe as long as you keep on schedule, bow and smile.

Rearrange the hair.

Rebuild the Baby green and pleasure. Tivoli. The fountain squirts lopsided.

Moldy tapioca dream of hirsute frogs. My terrapin Maryland—there's a hair in it.

Whose.

Fire egg. Diamond lizard. Marble shell feather.
Mercury golden foot.

Drug by Schubert setting of German chorales on radio this morning. Again, I'm brought down by a Baby playing with the valve which controls the fountain in the middle of the goldfish pond here in the garden of Shinshindo coffeehouse. I expected to be able to sit here—the only place in Kyoto where there's neither TV nor radio nor phonograph playing—to drink coffee and watch the fountain and the fish.

They've removed the Baby. The fountain has been left to dribble feebly. The sky's overcast, now—a few minutes ago, the sun was very bright.

Velvet rope universe, tassel world—
There in marshmallow dark Brazil knee laughing! Hummingbirds feather tassel contrivance to stop laughing? Marbles travertines blind schist a 37 degree turn from the angle of the other materials there deposed, *soil.* within the fold, the *horst*

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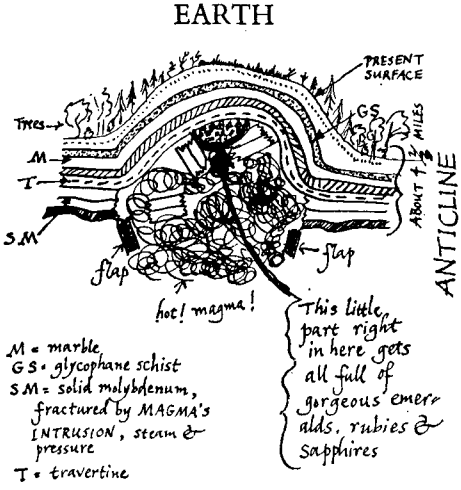
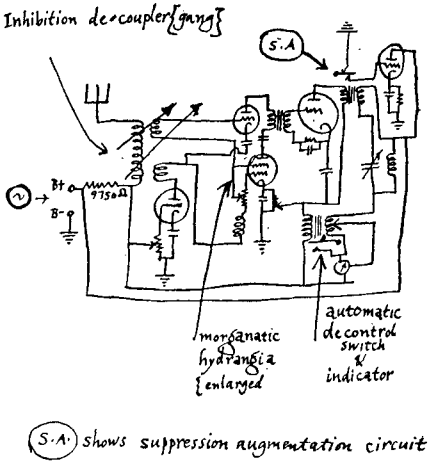
that will soon become darkly gleaming and all geologically



I'm finished with him, some bitch, only he don't know it yet. As long as I don't open the closet door. And the door to the basement. Or that trap door into the attic—if that were to begin opening, slowly, apparently of its own accord, my analysis will continue upon its even keel in the appropriate direction—straight up. (Interruption.) Nervous intervention PLEASURE CENTRAL:



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Baby turned the octopus egg to marble shark.
Re-program Hadrian feather. Start from the ground up.
Dirty Baby! Without pleasure nothing can be done. Stop it.

Just stop it.

Why don't you just stop it.

Why did you ever begin.

We are totally committed;

...not a minute too soon. Walls
of green jasper, columns of syenite, fountain inlaid with crystal
and jade. Fish, tortoise, octopus,
pearly marble Baby on a travertine shell

Kyoto
9:x—27:x:66

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Bedlam's Rent

Thomas Sterling

"The trouble with me, if you want to know, Mr. Winter —doll, do find a match for me. *Must* I beg, for God's sake? Thank you. I don't really look like this. Christ, there I go. Stop it, Maggie. The trouble with me is that I'm not worldly. Find me another drink. I won't go into that terrible room again. You do it. I know you can. No ice. And don't tell anyone it's for me. They won't give it to you. I like your hands. And please, please give me a light. Hurry!"

It was never an ordinary companionship. And John Winter sometimes felt it wasn't a companionship so much as an exercise in patience; but at this point he was merely being what he looked: an upright, pink-faced young man who frequently used patience as a weapon against what he did not understand. He was a "member of life," as she later informed him.

The party had ebbed and surged through the flimsy suburban house, threatening at moments to break out to the lawn where expectant garden chairs waited in the dying light. During one of the surges John found himself watching the greening light that came through a prim wood of poplar. A voice behind him said: "Of course you *did* run away from me. I'm not chasing you. God, I can't stand Siamese couples. One woman... Don't gossip, Maggie. Look at the yellow coming through *now*. *Please* sit down. Oh, the fools. Why don't they come out? No, I don't want them. I don't want anything but peace—go away. I didn't mean that. You are

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sweet. At least *you* had the sense to come out. *Look* at the sky. Look!"

She had been married many times, although she appeared to be a few years under thirty. She had come here alone tonight. She had a smattering of knowledge of a great many things, not for the knowledge, it appeared to John, but for the things. She rushed into intimacy and rushed away again, with the scorn of the rejected; but it didn't seem to him that she cared much, one way or the other.

"You *really* have good hands, that's why I asked you to get me a drink. I wanted to see them. All right, *don't* say anything about my hands. To hell with you. I'm going." But she didn't go. Not then. John felt it was the evening light that held her, however, not him. He noticed that her hands were extremely beautiful. Her face, at certain angles, was attractive and her body was appropriate. That relieved him. He preferred to share his tastes with others.

She gripped his forearm. "What's the date! No, don't tell me. I don't want to know. I'd hate you if you knew. Imagine *paying* to live in a house like this. Such a nice view—don't you think? No, you don't. You want to be in there with the rest of them. Go then. I don't care. Is it near the end of the month?" She buried her face for a split-second in expressive hands. Then she said, "Oh God!" and looked up, smiling. She patted John's arm. "There, there. It'll be all right."

"I don't suppose you have a car. None of my beaux ever do. Excuse me, you're not my beau, are you? That's a nice word, isn't it? It makes you think of blazer jackets. I wouldn't have you if they stuffed you with gold. Oh God, I'm being silly. Please don't let me go on like this. Say something. Oh, I know—go away. You'd say something rude like that. I'm tired. *Haven't* you any matches? Or any of those machines which shoot up flames and substitute for your... Oh, you see, you are a dear. I always think the worst. Curable pessimist. Oh, stars! 'I see the starres at bloodie warres in the wounded welkin weeping.' You know that. Say you do. I don't really care if you do, damn it. Just say it. Let's go in."

At the close of the evening he was listening to a young tele-

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vision actor telling of his part in a half-hour version of the *Respectful Prostitute*. He had always thought the word was Respectable. Maggie joined them. After a while she said, with no venom, "But I think it's wonderful that you can be an actor and raise a family and live so sensibly. And you don't even have to be *good*, do you?" After that, John agreed to take her home, although he guessed that she had run through everyone else before she considered him.

They got a ride back to New York in the station wagon of an unsuspecting couple. Maggie opened a brown paper bag and took out two beer cans and an opener. She had raided the host's refrigerator. "How could I know it was his best friend? He brought Bellevue up himself. Open this, doll. One big hole and a *little* hole on the other side for air. Don't slop for God's sake. Of course you won't do it right. No one ever does. After all, I've been to Bellevue—and Pilgrim State. Oh, now you *have* slopped. Haven't you? And I said, there's a little sadist there who force-feeds you Philip Wylie. Why not Addison and Steele, for God's sake? And it was his very best friend—the sadist. I couldn't know, could I? Be careful! I hate station wagons. I can't think why anyone would be stupid enough to buy one."

The couple who owned the car fell silent. Maggie sipped her beer. John spent the rest of the trip trying to understand his feeling for her. He was never comfortable when he couldn't understand feelings.

He went to her apartment. She hadn't asked him to come, but neither had she asked him not to. "Sit down—I have some beer. No—not there. Someone I love sits there. Any place, just *light* somewhere. You make me nervous. This was my first husband's furniture. I married him the last time, too, but I'm free now. Except for Billy. Here. Too much foam, I know. Go fix it yourself. I can't wait on everyone. Take off your jacket. It suffocates me to look at you. No, *not* there. I told you about that chair!"

He didn't feel that she was abusing him, but of course she must have been.

"...I was furious with him. I sent him the second notice,

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said if he was *going* to pay my rent why didn't he do it. I wouldn't take it from anyone else, but he was my first and last husband and he has *all* the money in the world. And I'll be evicted, probably. Oh, I don't care. Stop tapping. You don't tap well, anyway. You haven't any sense of rhythm."

Her apartment was a large single room with a kitchenette. The paint was beginning to crack and the Venetian blinds were broken.

"...of course I never was a very good actress. I didn't like it. Actors are better when they're stupid. And I would cut—cut my own lines and pick up the cue at the end. I never missed a cue. I only did it for the poor male lead who would have to stand around fidgeting until I finished. Such a good-looking boy. I almost married him. He didn't know Laertes was Polonius' son. He never bothered to read any part but his own. Well, Laertes was like that, too. Darling, please sit on the bed. You look uncomfortable there. That *silly* tie. Take it off. Will you do me *one* favor? No, I'll do it myself. Turn off the kitchenette light. Oh God. I only want you around because I can't sleep."

John went to turn off the light and when he came back to the bed he took off his shoes.

"And when I was divorced, the last time, my husband tried to stop me. Stay married to me, he said, and go off and do what you please. You won't know what to do alone. But I wouldn't listen and in two months I lost about fourteen jobs. I was a riveter once. That was the only job I liked but I menstruated three times a month."

She had miserably failed a filing-girl's test and a Fifth Avenue department store had kept her for one day. She had not been able to master the skills of a receptionist, and she was a hazard as a waitress. She hadn't made out as a telephone operator because she couldn't keep from breaking in on conversations. She had several times been taken off to state hospitals for trying to kill herself—usually with sleeping pills. "I never could take *enough*. And you know I can't sleep. No, you don't know yet, do you?" She spoke matter-of-factly of the wrackful siege of battering days as though it were a

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platitude and not, as John was vaguely aware, a quotation.

"So I thought, why should I look around for a way to earn money when God knows I *have* one talent. I decided to be kept so I wrote letters. Very business-like. 'Dear Sir'—not even dearest sir, you see— 'I should like to make application to enter your employ as a full-time mistress. I am 28 years old' ...body measurements, past experience, skills. I chose all the names from a mailing list of the New York State Chamber of Commerce. Pour me another beer, doll... I'm afraid there's nothing else here. Billy gives me some house money—not much, God knows—but when I buy Scotch with it he makes it even less. Scratch every man and you find a boy scout. Do I judge his rotten home life? Well, yes I do. *Do* get the beer. I'm not fair to Billy. He's very sweet. Thank you. Beautiful hands. His aren't. Do I look terrible? I know I do. Sit down, honey. I won't *bite* you."

John reminded her that she had been writing letters.

"Yes. I got dozens of answers. I knew I was going to be a success. And I chose one. He wasn't so bad, really—oh horrible, but you know what I mean. For him it was lust—for me it was just business. Except *he* was the one who knew about business. I was faithful because I wanted to do a good job. But after a year I slipped. Well, you *really* aren't interested. I think you'd better go."

John took a last sip of his beer and slid toward the edge of the bed.

"You're not leaving, darling? Why do people take everything literally? Well, go if you want—or stay. I don't care. After that I was interviewed—*interviewed.* I practically had to fill out a questionnaire for a job as a call-girl. Does that shock you? You're sweet. Oh, a well-paid one. He said we'll start you off at seventy-five and I said you'll give me one hundred and fifty or nothing. I thought I could just work one night a week, you know. There would be two kinds of men, he said. He had it all worked out. One was the family type who would want to show you to his friends and would probably let you off easily. They really want a decent night's sleep. The other kind would make trouble. But I knew about *that* kind already.

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"Are you tired, sweet? I know you are. And I just go on and on. Tell me to shut up. Can I play you one piece of music? It's Villa-Lobos. I always play it when the light's coming up. You see, it's morning already. You are a doll to listen. Why don't you get into bed? *Please* put on slippers. You know I... But you don't know at all. We've just met, haven't we? There're slippers in the closet. And I have a guest toothbrush, brand new. Go to sleep or go wash your teeth. Do something. I can't stand to see you looking like that. Or go home, if you like. Be quiet."

She had put on the record and John shuffled to the bathroom in oversized slippers. She handed him a new toothbrush. From the other room he heard a moaning soprano.

But several minutes or several hours after he had gone to sleep he felt her beside him. He turned toward her as though that had been the plan from the beginning.

He woke in the afternoon and found a note on his clothes telling him to make some coffee. It described the cup the coffee was to be served in and told him how to place it on the table beside the bed. He was to put *two* pillows behind her and give her an old shirt to cover her nakedness. He was then to say, "Here's your coffee, darling," and go to the *other* side of the room. The note was deadly serious and he obeyed. For ten minutes she sat in bed, scowling, sipping coffee.

Then she said, "Thank you." She looked into the empty cup. "Would you do me *one* favor?"

He brought her a second cup.

She wound up slowly. "I have to be careful. Really I do. I lost so much sleep last week that I had to get my doctor to come and drug me. I just couldn't stop. I was so tired the sheets hurt my toes. You don't know how nice you were to do what I said. I was so afraid you wouldn't. I think I could love a man just for that. Don't be afraid. Don't you have to work or something?"

He explained that he did not.

"Doll, do you have a *lot* of money or none? It's not important, but I wish you did. Well, of course I can see you don't. People I like never do, or they have to spend it on someone

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else. Oh God! I'm so sick of worrying about rent. I don't know how to worry about rent. Don't get upset. It hasn't anything to do with you. I was thinking about Billy. After all, I am his mistress. When I think of that fish in Mamaroneck. Do you know she came all the way back from Reno in a private ambulance? It was her way to keep from getting the divorce. Clever. That was after she heard about me. Women like that get divorces when they're punishing a man, not when they're doing him a favor. I think he was glad to have her back, only because he'd begun to realize he was left with me. Full time I frighten *every*body."

She told him about Billy, then. He seemed an ordinary, confused, hopeful man, with enough money to pay for an ambulance from Reno, and a bit left over.

"I don't take anything from him but house money. He lives here part of the week. He's away on a trip now. Don't get nervous. Well, you know there *would* be a scene. Still, I'm on my own. If there were only something I could do. Some other thing. Hand me that book there, sweet."

There seemed to be no definite line to mark the new day from the old, except that they were more intimate now. The book she had asked for was a copybook. It contained scribbled quotations which she read aloud, he felt, for medicinal reasons. There were Emerson's gliding snakes, bits of Matthew Arnold and Gerard Manley Hopkins and lines from speeches of Abraham Lincoln. She wasn't very learned. She had picked these things up like beads or pretty stones. Eclectic, John thought, using the first reasonable word that came to him.

"John, I must have a drink."

He had only four dollars, which he thought might buy a pint. "Oh don't. It costs so much to be poor! I have a few dollars. I didn't want to touch them but we ought to have a fifth."

He bought it and they spent the rest of the day and night in idleness and friendly passion. But before he went to sleep he heard her mutter, "Oh God! *Must* he be so careless?" John wondered if he should do something about her rent.

He left the next morning before she got up. He had an ap-

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pointment at noon and he had promised to call Maggie at two o'clock. When he did call she was cool. She couldn't see him, she said. Perhaps she could never see him, but if he would call again at seven she would know about that for sure.

He wasn't angry.

"I have to do something important," she said. "It's a business thing and I certainly can't think of seeing anyone—least of all you."

After he hung up he began to wonder what business she had.

At seven he called, and continued to call until eight, when she breathlessly answered, saying that he *might* wait until she paid the little boy.

"What little boy?" he asked, when she came back to the phone.

"The little boy who carried my packages. His mother always says don't give him anything but that's only because she's jealous. Oh, I mean it. She thinks he likes me too much. I did come all the way down in a taxi, you know—just to get your damned call. Can't you wait till I get my breath? Oh, I can't speak. I can't do *anything* till I take a bath. I want to scrub and scrub and..."

He heard her crying. It was intimate crying, quickly over, like one of her thoughts.

"You know, of course. You *do* know, don't say you don't. Oh, this smell! I earned seventy and I need sixty but I think I've spent more—I don't know how..."

She began to cry again and he asked searching, nervous questions.

"Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert. *Do* I have sixty? I can't even look. Well, I don't suppose you want to see me. I don't want to see you. I just want some peace. God! Won't you say something! No. All I want is a bath. I *can't* see you. If you want to come later..."

John said he would come right away. He searched his apartment for money and collected twelve dollars. There was no more cash, even in coins. He bought some dwarf roses and a fifth of Scotch.

Her room smelled of steam from the bath and her hair fell

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limply down her back. She had washed it, she told him, washed, washed, washed. But she liked the roses. Always bring prostitutes flowers, she said. And they would drink his whiskey, not Mr. Gilbert's. But she had already had a quarter of Mr. Gilbert's.

"Of course that wasn't his name. He keeps an apartment in the Beresford just for this. I'll *swear*, when I walked in, in my whore-suit—you know, simple with white gloves, no jewelry and a little hat—and asked for Mr. Gilbert at the desk, the clerk looked disappointed. Too subtle. *Don't* sit in that chair. No, I don't mind. Sit anywhere you like, but don't tap. You have no sense of rhythm. I didn't *want* ice. I told you—no, I'm being horrid. You didn't know. And he had a pleasant voice on the phone. He wasn't so bad. Except they all do the same thing. They all ask you how you got into this. It's inevitable. They want to know, as if it were any of their goddamn business. Certainly you tell a story—that's part of what you're paid for, maybe even most of it. The old Scheherazade. And another thing. You know how you always try to get free advice from a doctor? Well, it's the same. They have love problems. His wife is crazy about golf tournaments. What should he do? She goes off every afternoon and plays golf and he goes to play man. Jesus, Joseph and Mary! I thought I was going to get out after all. I talked. And you know what that can do. Doll, pour this out. Make me one with soda and *no* ice. You can do one thing for me, can't you?

"But he came around. He wasn't so bad. I mean he may even have been a decent man. Oh, I don't know what I'm saying. He's a cheat, like all the rest. They really want romance. They'd be sure to call it that. He wasn't bad-looking. He could have gone out looking for it. It's not so difficult. Oh, but I was *late*. Can you imagine being scolded for being late, like a secretary? And then, certain kinds of men always take everything out of their pockets and lay them neatly on a table—keys, wallet, loose change...

"And now, I'll tell you. Because I had almost talked him helpless he was afraid, you see, and he had to prove it again and that was a little sweet—or do you see that? So I began to

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like him a little. Well, that did it. It's enterprise, you see. If I had objected I would have a double fee—one hundred—but because I felt... Oh God, did I spend too much?"

John was shaken, in a familiar, unemotional way.

"Here, let's count." She pulled five dirty ten-dollar bills from a wallet. "I *must* have more. I walked past the subway but I couldn't take it. Then the whiskey and—oh yes. The perfume. I couldn't wear *my* perfume. I borrowed money from my hairdresser. Do you know? I can't scrub it off. I tried. Really, I tried.

"Doll, please sit here on the bed. Don't touch me. I'm sorry. I'm a fool. Everyone I know I could borrow from is out of town. *Will* you take off those shoes! Oh, I know. I look terrible. Stop it, Maggie. Can't you make me shut up? *Such* pretty roses."

John kept thinking about the money. It was not enough. And that was as bad as not having it at all. He explained to Maggie that he couldn't find cash for at least two days, when his quarterly check was supposed to come in, and that he would have to live on credit.

She was amused. "How sweet you are!"

She began to talk without a stop. She told of a bus trip in the middle of which she had asked a young Mexican soldier to step off with her to pick flowers. They hadn't got back on and didn't see a town for two days. And somehow, in Mexico also, she met a millionaire who kept her locked in the house. She enjoyed that, she said, until he refused to let her take sunbaths on the roof. The next moment she was in a powder-blue Cadillac racing for New York. (Somehow he could believe this more than all the rest.) But she forgot to give the machine oil and it stalled in the middle of Thirty-fourth Street at the intersection of Seventh Avenue, where she abandoned it. She spoke of Bellevue, "And this fool. You know, I told you, the friend of that psychiatrist the other night. He said he didn't believe I had enough intellectual companionship. So every *day* he read me the *complete* works of Philip Wylie. I'd rather have given him personal illustrations of the *entire* Kama Sutra and ordinarily he was the last man on earth I'd let put a finger

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on me—well, especially a finger. You know those scrubbed fingers with hair on the backs, like caterpillars? And I didn't dare say... If you've ever been in a hospital like that you keep your mouth shut. You put up with any kind of insanity just to keep from being called insane. The worst thing is being told you aren't unhappy, just crazy. Sweet, do you mind this? Sometimes I thought they were right—that I was. And sometimes I even knew it. But most always I wasn't. You *do* believe that, don't you? Oh, what do I care. Believe anything you like."

The night went on, and somewhere in the middle of it John realized that the next day was the thirty-first, the last day for her to pay her rent. "They *want* to get me out. I made so much trouble. And they want to charge more for it. They can do that if they get me out. My lawyer said that I would have to send the rent in a registered letter on the last day or..."

Then she told him a long story about her lawyer, who, she said, had been in love with her.

She would not go to sleep. At four o'clock they went for a walk. He had to drag her away from a hamburger stand where she tried to pick up a customer. They went home at six in the morning and she talked until nine. He made love to her, desperately, and fell into a deep sleep from which he woke at twelve, thinking about the rent. He found another note: "Darling, I called the bank. I have $8.50. Somebody didn't cash a check or something. So if you have about 95 cents and I have change that will make it. We've *got* to get to the bank."

He woke her at one, with coffee, knowing her well enough now to see that two hours was a very short time in which to get her to the bank. His head ached.

She was wild at being wakened. And when the telephone rang a few minutes later she grew maniacal. "Jesus!" she screamed at the mouthpiece. "How dare you call me so early. How *dare* you. I don't care if you've made a million. When did you get back? Go polish your badges. Don't *ever* call me again." She banged the phone down and rolled over in a naked ball of rage.

But he got her to sit up. "Here's your coffee," he said, stiff-

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ly. She brooded, like a banked fire sprinkled with new coal. Then she broke into flame.

"God. If you only knew how I hate you all! Two thousand dollars, he says. Now we can do this, do that. If his wife doesn't take another ambulance trip. Someone who claims to love you and he calls now! Get up on time, he says, don't drink, don't make a fool of yourself, don't, don't. Oh, I despise them. Golden rule boys, righteous boys. Not you, darling, you... I hate this. You're like all the rest. The only people I could ever stand were in three state hospitals—the private one was just like everything else. You all stood in line together, you all did *ev*erything together. And I said it! These people are too crazy to be cold and stupid. And you know they put me in that thing you're not supposed to call a strait jacket. I didn't *dare* call it that. I will *not* go on like this."

But he got her to go on. She dressed, finally, and they took a taxi to the bank. They arrived just in time.

Filling out the check she said, "Do you know, I was sent down from the Irving Trust? I mean it. Just like Cambridge or Oxford or someplace. I didn't know how to handle a checking account. The National City is fairly nice."

She had a special teller. He seemed fond of her and certified her check with a minimum of suspicion. They mailed the money at the post office and registered it.

Maggie fell silent after that. She asked him back for a drink, half-heartedly. They were both exhausted. He said good-bye at the subway station. "You *will* call again, doll?"

He said that he would and at that moment in his crisp life he believed that he surely would, if only for the pity one classically owes superior whores. Later—years later—he realized that her future had been as promising as his and, even at that age, that they were both heading down to a casual, inconsequent end. And maybe she had more fun getting there.

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Allen Ginsberg

City Midnight Junk Strains

for Frank O'Hara

Switch on lights yellow as the sun
in the bedroom...
The gaudy poet dead Frank O'Hara's bones
under squares of grass
An emptiness at 8 PM in the Cedar Bar
Throngs of drunken
guys talking about paint
& lofts, and Pennsylvania youth.
Klein attacked by his heart
& chattering Frank
stopped forever—
Faithful drunken adorers, mourn.
The busfare's a nickel more
past his old apartment on 9th Street by the park.
Delicate Peter loved his praise,
I wait for the things he says
about me—
Did he think me an Angel
as angel I am still talking into earth's microphone
willy nilly
—to come back as words ghostly hued
by early death
but written so bodied
mature in another decade.
Chatty prophet
of yr own loves, personal
memory feeling fellow
Poet of building-glass
I see you walking as you said with your tie

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flopped over your shoulder in the wind down 5th Avenue
under the handsome breasted workmen
on their scaffolds ascending Time
& washing the windows of Life
—off to a date with Martinis & a blond
beloved poet far from home
—with thee and Thy sacred Metropolis
in the enormous bliss of a long afternoon
where death is the shadow
cast by Rockefeller Center
over your intimate street.
Who were you, black suited, hurrying to meet,
Unsatisfied one?
Unmistakable,
Darling date
for the charming solitary/ young poet with a big cock
who could fuck you all night long
till you never came,
trying your torture on his/ obliging fond body
eager to satisfy god's whim that made you
Innocent, as you are.
I tried/ your boys and found them ready
sweet and amiable
collected gentlemen
with large sofa apartments
lonesome to please for pure language;
and you mixed with money
because you knew language enough to be rich
If you wanted your walls to be empty—
deep philosophical terms for Edwin Denby serious as Herbert Read
with silvery hair announcing your dead gift
to the crowd whose greatest op art frisson
was the new sculpture your big blue wounded body
made in the Universe
when you went away to Fire Island for the weekend
tipsy with a crowd of decade-olden friends

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Peter stares out the window at the robbers
distracted in Amphetamine
and I stare into my head & look for your/ broken roman nose
your wet mouth-smell of martinis
& a big artistic tipsy kiss.
40's only half a life to have filled
with so many fine parties and evenings'
interesting drinks together with one
faded friend or new
understanding social cat
I want to be there in your garden party in the clouds
all of us naked
strumming our harps and reading each other new poetry
in the boring celestial
friendship Committee Museum.
You're in a bad mood?
Take an Asprin.
In the dumps?
I'm falling asleep
safe in your thoughtful arms.
Someone uncontrolled by History would have to own Heaven,
on earth as it is.
I hope you satisfied your childhood love
Your puberty fantasy your sailor punishment on your knees
your mouth-suck
Elegant insistency
on the honking self-prophetic Personal
as Curator of funny emotions to the mob,
Trembling one, whenever possible. I see New York thru your eyes
and hear of one funeral a year nowadays
From Billie Holliday's time
appreciated more and more
a common ear
for our deep gossip.

July 29, 1966

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Rose

Her name
was Margaret
and she drummed
her fingers
on the card table,
a blond woman
in her early 40's
who played bridge
by the book—
bickering earnestly
throughout
with her partners
who also played
by the book—
but not
the same one.

No James,
I never
deceived you
with anyone.

Dazzle-charged silver
(this page) twisted
as boldly as chicken wire
against silken smooth white.

N.Y.-FEMALE,
dominant,
attractive.
Love the bizarre
and anything unusual.
Can travel.
Want to meet

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anyone who has
similar interests.
Males,
females,
couples.
Send photo.

I never slept
with another man.

A worldwide effort
is under way
to assess
the possibility
that the periodic
outbreaks
of flu
besetting mankind
may originate
in domestic animals
and be spread
by birds.

The surprise power
of a young, shimmering
coat-dress (opposite)
as it flips open
to reveal
dashing little
evening pants.

I never even
kissed one.

FLA.-FEMALE, 22,
5′5″ 34-24-34.
Interested
in discipline.
Want to hear

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from a dominant male
or female.

I was
completely
faithful.

Like so many
of her sisters
of the streets,
Mathilda's
arms and legs
are blotched
with purple
and pocked
with countless jabs
of the heroin needle.

Webbed
with jewel roses
at the shoulders,
slinked
body length
(above).
By Kiki Hart,
in Celanese acetate
and rayon
crepe-backed satin
by Chardon-Marche.

Samples
of bird blood
are being collected
by laboratories
in a number of countries
on behalf of the World
Health Organization.

And I didn't
sleep

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with Diter
until I had
left you
and returned
to Iceland.

N.Y.C.-FEMALE,
Negro.
Assertive nature.
Would like to hear
from passive males.

Dark velvety red.
Medium-sized buds
open into multi-petaled blooms
up to 4 inches across.

Like many,
she is also
a lesbian
who gets no pleasure
from the sexual act
with her customers,
but finds solace
with other women.

GA.-FEMALE,
would like to meet
a genuine transvestite
for a fun-filled trip
throughout the U.S.

The blood
is tested
to see
if the birds
carry—
or once carried—
a flu type
of virus.

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Emmett
or Maurice
would probably
have liked
to sleep
with me
but they never even
alluded to it

Golden-heeled
gilded legs
(for sipping
brandy
on the rug),
splashed
with brilliants
and pearls,
pulled
under a black
crepe tunic
with a bib
of jewels.

The cause
of concern
is the periodic
appearance
of new influenza
strains
against which
existing vaccines
are useless.

Two Montgomery women
are building
a two-bedroom,
bath-and-a-half house
all by themselves;
well, almost
by themselves.

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Our talk
was always
on another level—
there was always
a distance
between us.

A million
night-blue
sequins
swooped
with a hard-edge
finish
over soft flowing
crepe pajamas
in this season's
most irreverent
pink of evening.

The arctic tern,
whose remarkable migrations
carry it yearly
from one polar region
to the other,
has been found
to carry
such a virus.

This is
completely
honest.

She told me
that when about
nine years old,
she and another girl,
a schoolfellow,
used to push
their fingers
up each other's
cunts.

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I don't know
how to make it
stronger.

One cost-cutting
device
has been to use
old crown jewels
that were lying around
loose in bowls
in a vault
in Tehran's
central bank
for the Empress'
new crown.

ILL.-FEMALE, 31,
is seeking
a female
who is interested
in modeling.
Send
a full-length
photo.

YOU WERE RIGHT
TO BE CONFIDENT.

SEAL
THIS ENVELOPE
CAREFULLY
and write
your name
across the seal
as indicated above,
before delivering
to custodian.

YOU KNEW ME
WELL ENOUGH.

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Gerard Malanga

Cold

The young girl is unable to change
The form of her habitual thinking,
The posture with which she corresponds to
A feeling of sadness, the flow of her
Thoughts in which she is looking,
The facial expression, and so on;
She forgets herself to remember her pain
In the neck, to remember her problems.
I've said this before, remembering myself in the same
Situation until she came
Into my life for the first time
Remembering herself walking out in the open field
Of vision with eyes full of tears and smoke
Slowly coming out of her mouth.

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Author's Note on "Three Excerpts from *Comme*"

Composed with the adverb "as" *(comme)* as its starting-point, the book from which these excerpts are taken cannot claim to be a collection of poems, perhaps not even poetry. Its initial impulse was essentially one of demystifying a certain habit of reading: it is a method. Everything in this book has been enlisted in the task of unmasking and denouncing what I might call reading by identification (in which the reader identifies himself with the fiction or the fictitious atmosphere that the author proposes). This sort of reader, this sort of reading, which is what our culture practices, is brought into question in this little book and reapplied to the very function that our culture condemns—the act of reading. Thus the pronouns IL and ELLE, thanks to ambiguities readily exploited in French but missing from their English equivalents, lend themselves to a possible fictitious plot (the experiences of a couple) that can at any moment be transformed to a more or less metaphorical description of the act of reading. Constantly functioning in terms of the comparative adverb "as," IL can be at any time either a man reading the page of a book *(elle)* or the book that itself describes or "reads" a woman, to name two possibilities; these possibilities are limited to the extent that the ambiguity of the personal pronoun is used only to disarm the identification of the reader with the fiction—that is, to effect and then disarm the first impulse of identification—thus revealing the element of alienation inherent in a manner of reading that forms its own closed circuit, and having as its ultimate aim the initiation of the reader into a technique of generalized reading. According to this technique, the book will no longer be shut within itself in the absolute form of a fiction but will serve as an introduction to the demystification of fiction in general, whose most usual purpose is to censor the very act that produces it.

The title of this book was therefore not chosen out of poetic fancifulness but was meant to indicate as exactly as possible the way the composition of the book functions, and the point from which the work can in its entirety present itself for reading "as" a book.

MARCELIN PLEYNET

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

INTERVIEW

Robert Wilbur is a speech writer and adviser in public affairs at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. He has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Columbia University and has also studied at Harvard and the Sorbonne.

FICTION

Thomas Glynn was born in Montreal, and is now living in New York City where he has just finished a novel, *The Disease*.

Steve Katz is traveling in Europe and the Middle East. A novel, *The Exagggerations of Peter Prince*, will be published in May by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Leonard Michaels has received a Massachusetts Review Quill award for fiction and an O'Henry award; a short story will be included in *The American Literary Anthology* published by the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities. He is now teaching in the English Department of the University of California.

Mordecai Richler has published stories and articles in *Encounter*, *Commentary*, and *The New York Review of Books*. He was awarded last year's *Paris Review* Humor Prize for "A Liberal Education," a section from a novel, *Cocksure*, that will soon be published in London and New York. Earlier novels include *Stick Your Neck Out* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.

Thomas Sterling has lived in Rome for the past nine years and traveled extensively in Africa. He has published five novels, among them, *Silent Siren*, *The Evil of the Day*, and *Strangers and Afraid*.

CHRONICLE

William Brandon has written three books about the American West. His short fiction has been published in numerous magazines.

ART

Sarkis was born in Turkey and has been living in Paris since 1964. He has had one-man shows in Istanbul, Ankara and Paris, and was awarded First Prize at the Paris Biennale in 1967.

Érro, formerly Ferró, was born in Iceland. He has had one-man shows of painting and sculpture in France, Italy and the United States. He wrote the scenario and created the décor for *Mecamorphosis* which was filmed in Paris in 1961.

POETRY

André du Bouchet's collection of poems, *Dans le Chaleur Vacante*, published in 1962 by Mercure de France, was awarded the Prix des Critiques. He is one of the editors of *L'Ephémère*.

Jacques Dupin's most recent collection of poems is *Gravir*. He is the author of books on Miro and Giacometti.

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Dick Gallup will soon publish a group of poems in *Poetry*. His play *The Bingo*, was published by *Mother Press* in 1966.

Allen Ginsberg has been working on a book of his occasional prose pieces. A volume of poems, *T.V. Baby Poems*, will soon be published in England.

John Giorno recently had a collection of poems published by Mother Press in New York.

Allan Kaplan's poems have appeared in many publications including *Art and Literature*, *The Nation*, and *Chelsea Review*. He is at present studying for a Ph.D. in English at New York University.

George Kimball, born in Kansas, now lives in New York where he is an editor of *Grist* magazine.

Kenneth Koch is the author of *Thank You*, a book of poems, *Bertha*, a collection of plays, and *Ko, or a Season on Earth*.

David Lehman is a student at Columbia University where he has been awarded the Van Rensselaer Prize for poetry.

Lewis MacAdams teaches English at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is an editor of *Mother* magazine, and has recently published a book of poems, *City Money*.

Gerard Malanga published three books in 1967: *Three Poems for Benedetta Barzini* (Angel Hair Books), *Prelude to International Velvet Debutante* (Great Lakes Books), and *Screen Tests/A Diary* in collaboration with Andy Warhol (Kulchur Press).

Harry Mathews' poem "The Swimmer" *(The Paris Review #37)* was chosen for *The American Literary Anthology*. He is the author of two novels, *The Conversions* and *Tlooth*.

John Perreault writes for The *Village Voice*, *Art News* and *The New York Times*. Kulchur Press will soon publish a collection of his poems.

Marcelin Pleynet is an editor of the review *Tel Quel. Comme*, published in 1965 by Le Seuil, is his third book of poetry. A study of Lautréamont, *Lautréamont par lui-même*, was published in 1967.

Denis Roche's forthcoming book, *Eros énergumène*, will be published by Le Seuil, who have also done his previous collections, *Récits Complets* and *Les Idées centésimales de Miss Elanize*. He is an editor of *Tel Quel* and literary adviser at Editions Tchou.

Ed Sanders is the editor of *Fuck You, A Magazine of the Arts* and of a tabloid, *The Dick*. His rock and roll group, The Fugs, are currently recording their third LP.

Peter Schjeldahl is the author of *The White Country*, a collection of poems to be published by Corinth Press in 1968.

Hannah Weiner lives in New York where she designs lingerie and makes flag poems from *The 1931 International Code of Signals*.

Philip Whalen is the author of several books of poems and drawings. A novel, *You Didn't Even Try*, was published by Coyote Books.

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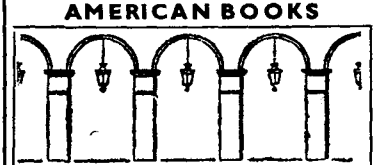
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The Great Electric Bird

ONE NIGHT NOT LONG AGO, an unstable young man was watching the late show on television. Suddenly, an enormous bird appeared before him and said, "I am interested in all manner of artistic activity." The young man mentioned a certain large American city. "Squack!" said the bird, "have you ever . . . I mean, baby, you just fly over that area some time and take a look at it. Except from a high altitude, I wouldn't even decorate that place!"

Another squack and the bird was gone. In its place stood a small group listening to a big hip saying, "Entrance exams, time machines, sex — everything is headed for the junkyard — and in the interim, only those who get with the cool breeze are really functional."

But these preachments did not convince the young man or those who believed in him. He, and they, were absorbed in the fascinating task of picking up the pieces of their environment and shaping them into something worth living in. One of their first crusades led them into the morass called "American higher education." They published a manifesto on what mattered and what must go in the contemporary U.S. college and university. And they called it **Matrix '67.**

Matrix '67 is a superb introduction to **motive** Magazine, the national journal of opinion which currently provides one of the nation's best platforms for new writing, art, politics, and ideas. Contributors such as Thomas Merton, Nat Hentoff, Robert Theobald, William Stringfellow, and Michael Novak orchestrate the Sixties' cacophony.

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